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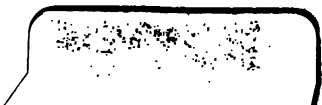




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PICKED UP IN THE STREETS

OR

STRUGGLES FOR LIFE AMONGST THE LONDON POOR

BY

RICHARD ROWE

"Good Words" Commissioner

AUTHOR OF "JACK AFLOAT AND ASHORE," "EPISODES IN AN OBSCURE LIFE,"
"FRIENDS AND ACQUAINTANCES," ETC.



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PREFACE.

SCENES of poverty and destitution are, alas! in some degree, familiar to all who spend their lives in the metropolis of this Empire, yet how comparatively few are acquainted with the inner life of the humbler classes of their fellow creatures.

It has been tritely remarked that "one half of the world do not know how the other half live." Truly, indeed, may this be said as regards the country at large, but more especially is it the case with reference to the crowded capital, with its teeming millions of human beings, who eke out from day to day a precarious existence. To remove to a slight extent this ignorance, by drawing aside the veil which enshrouds the dregs of the population, is the object of the accompanying articles, which originally appeared in the pages of "Good Words" and various other Magazines, where they attracted considerable notice. They are now, for the first time, presented to the public in a connected form. With the object of throwing additional light upon the scenes of life which are depicted, it has been deemed advisable to give some sketches taken on the

spot; and the Publishers avail themselves of the present occasion of tendering their best thanks to the authorities in Scotland Yard for affording both Author and Artist engaged the opportunity of visiting, in company with members of the Metropolitan police, haunts where, in some cases, it would not have been safe to have appeared unattended by one or more stalwart representatives of the law.

It is to be regretted that in consequence of the premature death of the Author, during the passage of his work through the press, some of the latter sheets have necessarily been corrected by other hands, who have taken the greatest possible care to give an accurate reproduction of the original.

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PICKED UP IN THE STREETS.



I.

SATURDAY NIGHT AT THE EAST END.

ON a rainy Saturday afternoon a sight may be seen in this huge London that gives a most vivid idea of its hugeness and its heterogeneous population—a little foreign town in its midst, silent and sealed. Wander on such an afternoon through the Jews' quarter—the nest of narrow streets, and lanes, and courts, of which alley-like Petticoat Lane, or Middlesex Street, and the broader and more wholesale dealing Houndsditch may be called the main arteries, and you pass line after line of fast-shuttered shops, catching over window-blinds glimpses of Jewish domesticities arranged by Gentile hirelings, hearing now and then the wheeze or the tinkle of indoor music, but seeing scarcely any outdoor life, save when a little band of laughing Jewesses (arrayed in the bright-hued and sometimes rich-tissued garments and gilt back-

combs, in which their parents love to frame their lemon-like complexions and glossy black or almost scarlet hair) make a dash out into the rain and then flash back again, screaming like a flock of paroquets. On a brighter Saturday afternoon the elders in Israel lean and loll at or on their thresholds, exchanging remarks and repartees with their neighbours on each side and opposite, whilst the youngsters—the girls for the most part bare-headed, armed, and necked—take their *al fresco* amusement.

On a summer's Saturday evening in Duke's Place (as those who frequent it persist in calling St. James's Place) a crowd of shrewd-looking Jews in black broadcloth, more or less white shirt sleeves, and gold chains, and portly, gaily-garbed Jewesses, with jewelled rings on their fat fingers, may be seen "enjoying the evening air" in armchairs tilted in front of the closed or nearly closed fruit warehouses; the children meanwhile playing leapfrog, or dancing to an Italian organ on the rotting fruit-market garbage that litters the small square. But still—especially as contrasted with its bustle when the street-sellers pour into it for their supplies—there is a Sabbatic tranquillity in the dingy, oriental-looking little place. A good deal of the Sabbath-keeping in the Jews' quarter may be formal and perfunctory enough, there being, probably, in proportion to totals, nearly as many merely nominal Jews as merely nominal

Christians in London. The widespread outward show of the observance, nevertheless, brings Sinai and London slums into an historical connection which it is startling to realise. The old clothesman still, after a fashion, observes the law which his forefathers pledged themselves and their seed to keep for ever, under the curses which the Mountain of Blessing echoed back to Mount Ebal.

The Friends, who have a meeting-house and a reading-room on the borders of the Jews' quarter, must find its seventh-day quiet congenial, but that advantage has a heavy set-off in its first-day stir. This sets in as the Sabbath sun goes down—an epoch, for the most part, only ascertainable from the almanac in London. Shutters are then rattled down, and the whilom quiet streets again buzz with life. The elders, with appetite sharpened by abstinence, resume their chaffering, whilst the young Jews flock to the theatre, the singing-room, or the dancing-room, play cards, or dominoes, or bagatelle in low coffee-houses, or gamble by tossing on tables muffled to prevent the chink of the falling coin from being heard outside. The Jewish element crops up every here and there in the strange medley of gaslight and squalor, dissipation and destitution, to be seen on a Saturday night in the East End, during the hours in which courts and thoroughfares in the City proper, that hum like hives by day, are almost

as silent and solitary places to hear the chimes in as a country churchyard.

To give an idea of some of the ins as well as outs of the East End's strange "Preparation for the Sabbath, or rather Sunday"—as seen under efficient guidance, in some out-of-the-way places—is the object of this paper.

Rattling into London on a Saturday night by the railway that runs round its north and east like a great fortification, you can see a great part of the East End in gloomily picturesque panorama. The angular meanness of the buildings is veiled by the dusk, and there stretches on either hand a hummocked wilderness of mysterious murk, now thickly, now thinly, sprinkled with withered windfall stars. In by-streets the lamps are so few and dim that the feeble flickering light they cast upon the house-fronts is only less dark than the pitchy-blackness that broods above the lonely-looking roofs on which unseen murder might be done. In the midst of the gloom gas-works' furnaces give out their infernal glow, kindling the air above and around into a core of lurid light, and painting bloody gleams and weirdly fantastic shadows on the neighbouring buildings and the grim black gasometers, that look like gore-stained devil's drums. Shadowy warehouses, and chimney-stalks, and ships' spars hang between the darksome earth and the darksome sky in very spectral fashion. And then, as



the train rumbles over a bridge, there is a glimpse for a moment of a long broad thoroughfare, with its dense dark throngs of stationary or slowly circulating passengers, dimly seen through the dazzling glare of the great publicans' lamps, and the double avenues of blazing shop burners and street-sellers' flaring lights; gas-lit dust, and smoke, and mist hanging and dancing above like motes in the sunbeams, and the shrill or hoarse cries of the costermongers piercing the hum of many voices like sea-gulls screaming over murmuring waves.

I may as well jot down here a little incident I witnessed near a railway arch, whilst walking from the station to the place in which I was to meet my guide. Under the arch (on a route not likely to have been selected for the playing of a trick), a ragged little girl, crying bitterly, was prying into a patch of black mud, in which, she said, she had dropped a penny. Some roughly clad men, who looked like dock labourers, were giving her their sympathy and help; but, as the help proved fruitless, the sympathy seemed very cold consolation. "Mammy" had sent her out to buy "supper" (!) with the missing coin, and would "whop" her if she returned empty-handed. When, however, a passer-by, who had stopped like myself to see what was the matter, gave her a penny, her tears were soon dried, and the little group was dispersing, when one of the men ran back to

say to the departing donor, "God bless ye, sir—may ye niver want a penny!" Had he lingered, he might have been suspected of wanting a penny for himself; but he instantly ran off again. Had I witnessed the scene later in the night, when I had learned to look upon human nature with detective eyes, I might have thought the whole affair—notwithstanding the pooriness of the result from such ponderous machinery—a "plant"; but, as things were, I found more pleasure in supposing that the Irishman, as the next best thing to doing a benefit himself, wished to enjoy the moral gratification of bestowing commendation on one who had conferred a kindness, which the Irishman's pinched pocket enabled him to appreciate.

When I reached my rendezvous—one of those quietly-placed "publics" that seem to have given a friend the slip in the main street, and to be peeping round the corner with a chuckle to see whether the friend has overshot them—the Irish barmaid (who was unpatriotically wishing her "counthry" at the "bottom of the *say*," owing to the pitiless amount of banter which her "oncets," &c., &c., were drawing down upon her) regarded me with a humiliating mixture of compassion and contempt, as a neophyte in naughtiness who had innocently obeyed the decoy call of the police and come to be caught. A Jewish-eyed customer,

leaning on the bar, who saw that I ran no risk of being taken into custody, favoured me with a glance of even greater superciliousness, as an inquisitive greenhorn bothering his head and wasting his time on matters that furnished no opportunity for a profitable "deal." Meantime a moon-faced young German, in his shirt-sleeves, kept on silently popping in and out from a back-room, like the figure on a cuckoo-clock grown dumb through age. He popped out; he gave a smile of blandest, most comprehensive, but very vague benevolence; he cut a caper, and then he popped in again, with a never-ending *Da capo*. My guide I found to be a shrewd, wiry, active man, with an eye that seemed, sharply yet quietly, to take in everything at once, as if, like a fly's, it could see all round him: well set up, and most civilly well spoken to those who spoke him fair, but supplied with an unlimited amount of "chaff" for those disposed to bandy it. I presently discovered, to my astonishment, that, having been engaged in a police-court all day, he was in full uniform, barring the helmet; for outwardly his knowing low-crowned hat, his neck-scarf, and his overcoat gave him the look of a sporting man.

Ignorantly supposing these to be a disguise, I asked him how it was that, in spite of them, wherever we went, his calling seemed to be generally known. With a smile at my "greenness," he answered that he did not care how

many people knew him in his everyday dress ; when he *didn't* want to be known, he would defy his own mother to recognise him. "*These*, sir," was his reply to a question as to whether he ever carried arms, as he took from his pocket a pair of "darbies," clinked them like castanets, and slipped them on his fist like "knuckle-dusters." "With the bracelets on I'd undertake to knock down a man twice my size." In his moral judgments as well as his attire there was a sporting tone. He seemed to look upon criminals much as a rat-catcher looks on rats. The particular vermin pursued at any one time must, of course, be done for ; but the breed at large was regarded with compassionate forbearance as nature's provision for the policeman's excitement and support. He did not blame a man for showing fight—so long as he did his collarer no serious damage—if he had any fair chance of escape ; but to do so when he had no such chance, just for the sake of being thought "game," my companion considered "bosh,"—a folly which few "*regular* criminals" would be spooney enough to be guilty of. My guide summed up his ethics on this head thus : "If a man don't try to hurt me, I won't hurt him. But if he does, I hit him hard. No man likes to be hurt, you know, sir."

I was favoured with details of an East End capture effected on the previous Saturday night, or rather Sunday morning. My mate and *his*

mate, after searching all the other houses which their quarry "used," had tracked him, in the small hours, to the last. Like rabbit-netters on either side of a hedge, the mate watched the front of the house, whilst my acquaintance (whom, for convenience sake, I will henceforth designate as C. Sharp) went round to take it in the rear. In clambering over the back-yard wall, he disturbed the tenants of the back-yard's hen-roost; and, aroused by their cluckings and crowings, dim faces appeared at the back windows of the neighbouring houses, to see who was stealing the fowls. There was no time to be lost. With a kick and a shoulder-shove the back-door was forced in, but just then up went a bed-room window; and, rushing out again, C. Sharp beheld his man drop first his clothes, and then himself, into the next back-yard. The dividing wall was climbed over somehow, and C. Sharp pounced upon his prey, still sprawling in his shirt. "Let me get up—I've spilt some money—I'll go quietly," he cried. But the captive was a good deal bigger than his captor, and had sworn to "put his light out"—a metaphor for murder—rather than be taken by him. So C. Sharp politely informed him that he should have every facility for finding his scattered cash when he could hunt for it in handcuffs, and held him down until the consort-sergeant rushed in to complete the capture. When one thinks of the time, and toil, and

skill which these men devote to the security of society, and of the deadly risks which, at any moment of the day or night they may be called upon to run in her interests, their services certainly seem cheaply purchased, poorly paid, by a wage far nearer twenty than thirty shillings a week.

“ Well, what is it precisely that you want, sir ? ” said C. Sharp. “ To get a general notion of East End life on Saturday night, eh ? Well, this kind of thing, of course, you’ve seen before ; besides, you can see that North, and South, and West, as well as East.” I assented ; “ this kind of thing ” being a long, narrow thoroughfare so crowded both on the pavement and the roadway, that the squalid, greasy passengers trod on one another’s heels ; a road kerb-fringed on both sides with the quaintly-lighted stalls of bawling street-sellers ; side-paths bordered by dingy publics and dimly-lighted chandlers’ shops, and gas-flaring opposition butchers’ shops and greens-and-coal sheds next door to one another. Perhaps, the butchers’ shops—in front of which plump journeymen kept up their cry of “ Buy, buy, buy, buy,” like monotonously strident night-birds, whilst hollow-eyed women, whose skinny cheeks and limp cotton skirts seemed both to have lost the very memory of their last washing, *cheapened* meat exposed at 4d. a pound—had a specially pantomimic look from the queer cut of the tiny “ joints ” with which

their fronts were hung; and there was some interest in being told, time after time, that such and such an apparently thriving greengrocer, watching more draggle-tailed spectres picking out his potatoes, had begun life a few years before with a costermonger's barrow; but otherwise there was not much novelty in the walk along that thoroughfare. Its general feature was not the success in life of the distributors, but the dreary depression in life of the actual or would-be purchasers—the misery caused sometimes by their own drunkenness and crime, but oftener, perhaps, by civilisation's impotence or carelessness to remedy its own barbarian-making consequences, which may be seen, alas, in almost every London street-market. As we turned down a lane *en route* for a sailors' music-hall, we passed a policeman in controversy with a blear-eyed knave, who cowered before him like a frightened beast, but with just a hint in his bleary eyes of the savage gleam that may be seen in the eyes of a cornered rat. He would have liked to spring at the tall fellow who ordered him to move on, but pluck was not his line, and so he cowered, and coaxed, and sulkily protested with curbed sauciness. "The most notorious duffer in London, sir," said C. Sharp. "He waylays drunken sailors, and sells them brass rings for gold, and paper packets of dry horse-dung with a pinch of tobacco at the top—smuggled he calls it. They *must* be drunk, or

else they must be precious fools, to be taken in by a chap like *him*. Just look at him." There certainly was not much to allure confidence in his aspect as he slunk away after receiving something like Lord Chesterfield's reply to his plea that he must live. The very lift of his legs seemed to bewray him as a sneaking rascal.

The music-hall was a chapel-like structure, with a gallery running round three sides of it, an orchestra for a deacon's pew, and a glass-panelled stage for apse or chancel. Waiters in white neckcloths, red waistcoats, and metal-buttoned livery coats ministered to the wants of the audience (largely "seasoned with salt"), who, pipe or cigar in mouth, and glass or measure in hand, were listening, as if they were trying hard to think it funny, to a song by two "comiques," male and female, attired in the Zany costume, supposed to be facetious, which now stares one in the face from every music shop. A stanza of idiotic trash was shouted and screamed in concert, with much rolling of eyes and restlessness of arms and legs. Presently the restlessness became ungovernable, and the performers broke into a symphony of idiotic dancing. And so on, and so on, until the song finished, amidst thunders of applause, in a teetotum whirl by the male performer, with one arm stuck out like the spout, and the other curved like the handle, of a teakettle; whilst the female performer, clasping her hands round

the latter, spun round in a concentric orbit. Such asinine "comicality," however, is common now-a-days to most of the music-halls of a land which once enjoyed the richest of humour, but now worships Great Vances and Jolly Nashes, and shrieks with delight at a burlesque "break-down." What struck me as special in this music-hall was the business-like manner in which the sailors were taken in tow by the female corsairs cruising in squadrons about the hall. It is a delicate, or rather an indelicate, thing to write about, but unless such scenes are at least hinted at, East-End night life—and, for that matter, day life too—would be very imperfectly described. These women made their selections in as open and matter-of-course a way as farmers picking out horses or cattle at a fair, and the selected got up and walked off with them with as little anxiety to avoid notice as if the suddenly affectionate couples had been husbands and wives walking out to church.

A narrow, paved alley, almost every other window in which had little blue and red flags painted on its panes to show that it belonged to a sailor's lodging-house, led us down to the thoroughfare which Mr. George MacDonald has called "the sailor's heaven at sea and hell ashore." The stiff sailors' garments, dangling outside the slopseller's at the dim corner, swayed in the night wind like pirates hung in chains.

"The Highway" is said to be a very different place from what it was when such ghastly sights might be seen with the bodily eye on the points of the reaches as the ship tacked up the Thames. During the last generation the Sailors' Home, the Thames Mission, and other agencies, are reported to have diminished Rat-cliff rowdyism very markedly. I noticed myself the other day a cheap book-shop in the Highway, which would seem to be an indication of a higher tone of taste. It is still, however, a route that one would not like to take a decently-bred child along either by night or day. The *maxima reverentia* has been owed so long there that the indigenous youth can be scarcely made more wickedly knowing than they are by the still deferred payment. The Highway abounds in low public, to which, in the rear, low dancing-rooms are attached. "In a brisk time they are all going, sir," said C. Sharp, "but things are slack in the shipping-trade just now. However, let's step in here," pointing to a doorway with a foreign name over it. "It's a place the foreign sailors are fond of. Many a man has been stabbed in it!"

At the top of a dwarf staircase leading from the bar drooped a dusty curtain. Behind was a room, recently swept and watered, with benches running along the walls. On these sat half a dozen bold-eyed girls, waiting for partners. Not a sailor had as yet come in;



unless the pea-jacketed, olive-complexioned master of the ceremonies was one. This functionary chose to confound my identity with that of some fast gentleman who, he said, had "taken out a girl" on a previous evening, and proffered his services to find me "*another* partner"—one of the sisterhood at the same time advancing to save him the trouble. He begged my pardon as politely as any regular M.C. could have done when I assured him of his mistake; but, as there was no dancing to be seen there unless I figured in it, I thought that it was high time to depart.

"That didn't taste much like sherry, did it, sir?" said C. Sharp, as we stepped into the street. "However, I can venture to take a nip there. There are some of those places where I'd no more do it than I'd drink a gallon of laudanum. Did you notice that man behind you in the bar?—the man with the white wide-awake that was trying to pick a quarrel when we first went in? He's one of the 'cutest thieves we have. You may remember he said 'Good-night, sir,' to me, and I said 'Good-night' to him. If a man *is* a thief, you may as well be polite to him till you want him." I could not help being amused at the semi-respectful manner in which he spoke of the 'cute wide-awake, against whom he had to pit his wits—much as a chess-player who has won three games, but lost one, speaks of his opponent. I could not help, however, thinking

also that, if it could be done without risking the liberty of the innocent, or bearing hardly on guilty men who wish to reform, it would be a good thing if such "habit and repute" rascals—men whom the police know to live by felony, and who know that the police know that *they* know that the police know it—could be prevented from going at large until some false move of theirs enables their antagonists to give them check.

The next dancing-room we entered was, most literally, in full swing: inflated skirts rushing round and round like balloons caught in a cyclone, and coming down in what children call "cheeses" when whirlers and whirlees halted for a minute "to get,"—in their own graphic, although not exactly Belgravian, phraseology—"a blow." (An utterly otiose adjective, of a complexion as florid as their own, was prefixed to the substantive by the panting pairs.) Two Guards drummers were coming down the stairs; two Guardsmen were lounging on the tables in the dancing-room, critically scrutinising the dancing; but the male dancers were all sailors—and so far as the mere dancing (which seemed thoroughly enjoyed for its own sake) went, both male and female dancers were very harmlessly employed. It was a pity they *left off* dancing. It is a pity Jack cannot find purer partners. Very pitiful it was to see, amongst the partners whom he had, a still innocent-looking girl of

seventeen, with country freshness still upon her cheeks, and her housemaid's cap still fluttering like a white butterfly on her bonnie brown hair.

Once more in the Highway, C. Sharp suddenly stopped, and shouted, as it seemed to me, "at large." But at the sound two stunted boys slipped from the pavement, and slunk along the roadway, burying their drooped heads in their raised shoulders, drawing in their spines, and sneaking away with furtive, half-grovvelling speed, exactly like hounds shrinking from the lifted lash. If they had only let their hands, extended in token of innocence, touch the ground, and had had propitiatory tales to wag, the resemblance would have been complete. It was inexpressibly painful to see human beings crouching in that bestial fashion before their fellow-man. "In the image of God created He him" would have been a fiendishly mocking text to remember, had it not been for that other memory—"in all points like as we are, yet without sin." "Trying pockets, sir, that's what they were doing," was C. Sharp's explanation. "Out-and-out young rascals they are. They lurk about here, and when they see a sailor a bit sprung coming along, one of them puts out his foot, and when the spooney chap stumbles, the tother makes a rush at him and grabs his watch.—But things are slack in the Highway to-night. What do you say to a peep at the Spitalfields Thieves' Nest? You've been there

to pull out her tooth, he once more walked about, brandishing his weapon. Again he approached his victim, masked her, and shore off the head amid silence, only broken by hysterical shrieks from a few of the women. When a gore-dripping head was held up by the hair, whilst a seemingly lifeless trunk lay back in the chair, it "brought the house down;" but the applause was not nearly so great when, after a little more manœuvring with the mask, the young lady rose from the chair as full of life as ever. There seemed to be a general feeling of disappointment at seeing her with her head on again. As we came out, C. Sharp discussed the performance with an inspector with whom he had foregathered. "It draws," remarked the inspector sententiously, "and takes; but, somehow, not as it did at the West End. You see, the people here are up to illusions." "Hillusions!" grimly retorted C. Sharp. "They don't *sham* to cut a woman's head off; they *do it*."

We went next into a "penny gaff." Two floors of a house had been knocked into one to form the concert-room. Rough wooden seats, rising at the end of the room nearest the door like a flower-stand, with a villanously dark, dirty, narrow, and mal-odorous passage behind the same, were devoted to those disposed to pay only a penny for their entertainment. Two-pence was charged for a seat in the more aristocratic gallery, or perhaps I ought to call it

"balcony-stalls." The accommodation and the audience seemed precisely of the same stamp in both; the latter consisting chiefly of boys of from ten to sixteen, some of whom favoured my companion with a furtive scowl from beneath their heavy, low-pitched brows. At the farther end of the room was a tiny, tawdry stage, like that of a cheap child's theatre slightly magnified, and on it a tall woman, who looked quite a giantess in that narrow space, was singing something. Probably it was too sentimental, or not highly flavoured enough, for the taste of her hearers, for they sat as glumly silent, and as puzzled-looking as jurymen listening to "points of law" of which they can make neither head nor tail. A drearier specimen of "enjoyment" I never witnessed. As we went out, we were met by the male "star" of the establishment with a sheaf of benefit-tickets in his hand; which he pressed us to purchase on the ground that he was going to sing on his benefit night "The Eel-pie Shop"—I think he added "as performed before His Royal Highness."

Before turning into the Thieves' Nest, C. Sharp went back to speak to a policeman in uniform we had passed. "May as well have some one handy," he said, as we walked through a black, narrow lane. "This is the place where the two policemen were killed. One never knows what may happen in here. We never try to take a man single-handed here. It would be stupid.

district's *restaurant*, a little cabin whose shelves were lined with coarse earthenware basins, and on whose counter leaned some three or four pale flat-busted women, who seemed to have nothing but their dirty gowns on, and to think some nutriment might be obtained by breathing the atmosphere of a place in which cowheel-soup was made. They had all, however, their grateful joke ready for C. Sharp when he graciously condescended to jest with them. The policeman to such people seems to be a heathen's idol—to be banged about the head in moments of furious disappointment, but in sane hours to be buttered with slavish, though still superstitiously suspicious, adulation.

In a nook which (although I pride myself on my "organ of locality") I could no more find again without guidance, than I could name Dr. Livingstone's last lodging-place, I was introduced to a landlord who had "lived for the last six weeks on rum." We had to force our way into his kennel of a bar, by ungallantly pushing against the counter a broad-shouldered woman, whose weight kept the half-glass door fast closed.

The mite of a place was thronged—some of the customers looking like decent tradesmen; but as soon as we got in, there was a hush, followed by a wish to speak to personal character. "I'm old and tough," said an old woman, smiling a most drearily lonely smile.



"The worms is^u my husband. He was a fine young man when flash young fellers now wasn't thought of. I'm sixty-six, come Lady-day, but no man ever put a hand on my shoulder, or had cause to, and I don't mean to give 'em cause, either." There was some gin, perhaps, in the poor old body's pathos, but she certainly did look a most desolate old soul, as she leaned against the wall, smiling all to herself that joyless smile. On the west coast of New Zealand, a year sometimes comes and goes in which there is no summer: there are many such *lives* in the East End of London.

Behind the bar knelt a matronly-looking woman (with roses, which, though only artificial, seemed to be drooping as if stifled, in her cap), bathing and bandaging her husband's leg; the rum-loving Boniface having recently tumbled down stairs. Both looked up anxiously when we entered, and when C. Sharp, for a joke, had introduced me as his "pal," the old man became very pressing in his entreaties that we should "put a name to something" at his expense. The exact nature of our "business" he was plainly puzzled to conjecture—what particular customer we were looking out for, or what misdeed of his own we wished to bring to light; but having, probably, an extensive choice to pick from, he was all the more anxious to conciliate. We had not to clear the doorway in order to get out; it was cleared for

us with most polite, and yet uncomplimentary, promptitude. I never before saw my room so pointedly preferred to my company.

Some of those I had just left might possibly be thieves now and then, but I wanted to see how indubitable "professionals" enjoyed themselves on Saturday night, when off duty. On mentioning my wish to C. Sharp, he said, "Well, sir, there's a house not far off whose regular customers are a'most *all* regular thieves—anyways used to be. I hardly like to take you in, for we might get into a mess if they'd got the beer on board. However, we'll look in just for a minute."

We were doomed to disappointment. When we entered the cavernous, dimly-lighted bar, the solitary landlord looked up for a moment with a glance of expectation, but it changed into one of disappointment and suspicion when he saw who had come in. He was a strange host to find in such a hostelry; dandyishly dressed in spotless white linen and good black broadcloth, sporting a neatly curled moustache and Dundreary whiskers, and wearing on a face otherwise as insipidly regular as a hairdresser's dummy's, a look of drolly Byronic-hero-like dejection. "Not a man in dere, sir," he said in a slightly foreign accent, as C. Sharp advanced towards the inner darkness that seemed to creep in noiseless inky wavelets into the dim bar. C. Sharp, having satisfied himself that

there wasn't, opined "new comer, I think?" and having been answered in the affirmative, led me off to find materials elsewhere for a sketch of a "Robbers' cave in London—bandits revelling." "Your manners," says Emerson, "are always under examination, and by committees little suspected—a *police in citizen's clothes*—but who are awarding or denying you very high prizes when you least think of it." The force of the italicised simile came home to me as I walked along the broad thoroughfare again—C. Sharp seemed to know the biography of every street-seller we passed. His moral diagnosis was not charitable, and, when favourable, very guardedly expressed. "Now *that* man's honest," he would say every now and then, "*in a sense*." Presently he stationed me behind a cab-rank, causing some commotion amongst the cab-drivers, who came round to inquire, "Anythink up in *hour* line, guv'nor?" But what C. Sharp wanted me to see was a case of attempted pocket-picking. He gave me a lighted glass panel to guide my eye, and for some minutes we watched it as intently as astronomers waiting for the transit of a planet—in this case, Mercury. But Mercury would not cross the disk, and so we once more set out in quest of a place in which we might find him in company with Bacchus. "We'll go up here," said C. Sharp, halting at a stairfoot that led to the first floor of a dirty public-house,

that somehow reminded me of a beaten prize-fighter that had taken to drinking. "For one man that isn't a thief, you'll see twenty that are." Two roughs lounging on the stairs looked up saucily; but when they saw who had come, they rolled themselves up like sowbugs. In the room we entered there must have been, according to the formula just given, considerably more than forty thieves. Amongst them there were a few women, and one of these—taking me for a Telemachus gone astray, and not seeing, or not recognising, the Mentor who stood behind me—got up at the end of the room, and began, in vulgar phrase, to "cheek" me. She was speedily, however, pulled down, and ordered to "shut up" by her sharper-eyed companions. But sulkiness, rather than sharpness of vision, was the attribute that chiefly characterised the assembly. They glared at me heavily—much as Van Amburgh's beasts, after a full meal, might have glared at an inexperienced friend whom he had taken into their cage. The tamer, perhaps, might have some right to come inside; but what right had the stranger to tempt them, if he was not to be torn?

Anything less picturesque, or jovial than the appearance of the room, it would be hard to conceive: two or three score of thick-necked, low-browed young men and hobbydehoys, in greasy cords or threadbare pea-jackets, and a

sprinkling of ugly, shabbily-dressed women, sprawling their elbows on porter-slopped tables in rough wooden boxes, smoking rank tobacco, drinking adulterated beer, and listening, in moping, unsocial silence, to the wiry jangle of a worn-out little square piano in a corner, that seemed to shriek complaint against the cruel vigour of its seedy, bottle-nosed thumper.

As a finish to our night about town, C. Sharp conducted me to what he called the "lower slums" (nearer the docks), warning me that I must not mind a rough word or two. Not a word, however, either good or bad, did we hear directed to ourselves; and (save when a troop of little ragamuffins dashed, hooting like a flock of owlets, into a black gap that looked more like a narrow cliff-chasm than a humanly-inhabited court, and the angry voice of an old Irishwoman, jealous for the gentility of her residence, bade the "owdacious spalpeens," from an upper window, "be off wid ye") we heard and saw, indeed, no sign of life. Black silence and bad smells were the salient features of that ganglion of interlacing alleys, courts, and lanes, —some flat-sided as a packing-case, and others dimly differentiated with squat, pent-housed doorways, and low-pitched archways, that seemed to have been expressly designed for garrotters' lurking-places. It was like wandering through sewers. Ever and anon we stumbled upon ash-heaps, that sent up a stifling stench when the

foot stirred their garbage. Even here, however, washing was done. On clothes-lines stretched across courts, rags rustled in the night wind like tattered banners in a church. They might surely have been hung lower down, for who could care to steal them? I might, perhaps, have seen more life in the lower slums if I had wandered through them without an official guide; but, even if I had been able to get into and out of them alone, I frankly confess that I should not have liked to venture.

It was a relief both to body and mind to feel the breeze blow fresh from the country as I mounted the hill at whose foot the big, black city I had left, canopied with a haze of lurid light, lay like a City of Destruction—to see the almond-blossom gleaming, although only by gas-light, in the suburban gardens—to hear the early Sabbath hour tolled from a church surrounded with grass and trees—to return, after all the dismal homelessness I had seen, to the peace and purity of a home in which I was waited for, and little children were smiling in their sleep.

On another occasion I alighted in Goodman's Fields, hard by the theatre in which Garrick made his first hit, and which bears his name. In front of it, blocking up the greasy pavement, and overflowing into the slushy, sloppy

roadway, there is a little crowd of shabbily-dressed girls, boys, and undersized hobbledoys. A little chaffing and pushing is going on, but for the most part they stand as still as bullocks under the drizzling rain, feeding their eyes, until the theatre opens, on the gilt cap-band of its front manager, beadle, or whatever else the bulky, uniformed official who stands outside to keep order may be called; and on the theatre's little cluster of gas-lamps, which, damp-dimmed though they are, differentiate it with a glow-worm glimmer from the other houses of the dark row in which it stands. We will look into the theatre presently; but, in the meantime, we are due at the adjoining police-station, where we have to meet the dragoman from Scotland Yard, who is to accompany us on our Eastern tour. Up a paved alley into a little paved court, in which a number of helmeted, great-coated policemen are drawn up in line; and then up some old-fashioned doorsteps into the outer police-office. Its walls are tapestried with police-notices, one of them illustrated with a photograph of a "wanted" house-breaker. It contains a dock, with a height-gauge behind, and a desk at which a sergeant in uniform is writing. Opposite him is an inspector in uniform, with a ledger-like book before him, framed in a pigeon-hole in a railway booking-office-like partition. We have made a little mistake as to time, and go into

an inner office to wait. Its occupants give up their stools to seat us, and, to beguile the time, bring out an assortment of handcuffs, fit them on us, and laughingly snap-to the steel bracelets; a venerable and popular clergyman, the late Dr. Guthrie, who is of the party, looks particularly droll in the "darbies."

True to his time to a minute, our dragoman arrives, but before we start we look into the station's cells. Only one is occupied. When a "bull's-eye" flashes into it, a pallid, dirty, boy of ten, curled up on a bench, tries to cover his face with the rug which is his only bed-furniture. He is "in for" stealing a pound and a half of sugar out of a van. Poor little pale-faced fellow, perhaps he stole it to raise money to go to the theatre hard by, which is the first place we call at, as the nearest approach to a "penny-gaff." When reminded that in 1868 there was a genuine penny-gaff in Whitechapel, our dragoman says that the gaff has been put down, and the premises turned into a wax-works place.

Our theatre consists of pit, boxes, and gallery: prices of admission—to the boxes, twopence; to other parts of the house, one penny. The pit is the only part of the house tenanted when we look in, and that is only spotted with clusters and couples of grimy, greasy, heavy-looking young people. They chat aloud, freely during the performance, some playing the part



THE PENNY GAMP.



of (generally indulgent) critics, others of explanatory chorus. On the whole, they behave well enough; but the uniformed official, with somewhat supererogatory jealousy for the reputation of his house, is very fond of shouting "Order!" A girl looks angrily at him, and retorts—"Horder! You wants a deal too much horder, *you* do. We ain't afore a jury!"

"Wapping Old Stairs" is the piece at which for a few minutes we assist. All the songs have been cut out, the uniformed official explains, because none of the performers can sing; but he adds proudly, as if the statement must necessarily make us condone that deficiency—

"The great Braham used to sing 'Wapping Old Stairs'—be-yutiful song, gentlemen, isn't it?—the Great Braham!"

The scenery and other stage appliances of our theatre are almost as scanty as they were in the early days of the drama. The acting, in spite of the poor house, is conscientiously vigorous and vociferous. It is quite as satisfactory to the æsthetic sense as the bulk of English acting anywhere nowadays, and more satisfactory to the ethic sense. It is not a bit like nature—its comicality is very dreary; but, then, ever and anon it bawls out moral maxims through a speaking-trumpet.

Our young friend who objected to the uniformed official's court-crier-like demands for "order," acts as chorus to the less-experienced

members of her circle. "The cap'en's only a woman dressed up," she says. One of the characters has to talk in Cockneyese. He talks it when he is *not* performing, the large majority of his audience talk it too; and so, to render the would-be caricature effective, he has to ultra-aspirate the vulgar vernacular outrageously. Our young chorus almost shrieks with delight. "*H—he—hignorant* means *hignorant*," she interprets.

No great harm done, so far, to anything but the Queen's English, we think, as we move out, and turn riverwards.

A music hall largely patronised by sailors is our next house of call. It is full of fog and tobacco-smoke, and fumes of steaming grog. Glasses are clattering, spoons clinking, tongues clacking. There is a hush for a moment or two whilst the trapeze performer, who is earning his bread by risking his neck, darts and swings in mid air. As soon as he has reached his perch, with patches of perspiration blotching his flesh-coloured tights, tables are thumped until tumblers and jingling spoons jump up in a staggering dance; the people in the lower part of the house thumping hardest, as if expressing their gratitude—not because the performer is safe, but because he has not missed his hold, and dropped on them and their "refreshments." In the gallery, women, whose business there is unmistakable, are roaming

about ; but, whilst we stay in it, "decency," perhaps, is not more openly outraged, so far as we can see, than it is in music-halls farther west. Sailors are the favourite victims. Maudlin with drink, they yield at once to the allurements of their generally hideous and harsh-voiced sirens.

Our dragoman tells us, however, that sailors, as a class, are not nearly such big fools as they used to be. The case is exceptional now in which a sailor allows a "siren" to take possession of him as soon as he is outside the dock gates, and keep possession of him until he has spent on her all his wages for his last voyage, and as much as he can get advanced and discounted of his wages for his next voyage. Sailors' Homes, doubtless, may be credited with a considerable proportion of this improvement. In most large ports now, a sailor who wants to protect himself against temptation, is able to do so, through the various instrumentalities of these admirable institutions. But there are fools amongst sailors still, as we see again when we go into some of the numerous dancing and singing rooms behind public-house bars in and about Ratcliff Highway, as St. George's Street, E., persists in calling itself, and getting itself called. We do not see these rooms, however, in the full tide of their revelry, because, as we enter, we generally hear the warning ting of a bar-pulled bell. The women customers of the

house do not seem to mind our brief presence, but rather to like it—so long as we soon move on again—as an unexpected item in the evening's entertainment; but the white-faced, brown-Cardiganed, short-aproned, used-up-looking waiters regard the unprofitable visitors as sulkily as they dare before a dragoman from Scotland Yard, and finger-telegraph contemptuous appraisements of us (as we judge from the titters which acknowledge the receipt of the telegrams) to the girls behind us. Some of the houses are frequented by sailors of all nations; others are distinctively Spanish, German, and so on. In a Prussian house we enter, we are told that the girls are dancing with one another, "because this — war keeps all the men away." In another house an old Irishman, drunkenly sympathetic with the French, and most gratuitously supposing that none of us can, more soberly, share his sympathy, inquires with semi-articulate indignation whether we expect to go to heaven? The landlord takes him by the collar of his coat and the seat of his breeches and runs him out into the street, where, when we go out, we find him waiting to bid us go—to the antipodes of heaven.

Dancing and drinking are the staple amusements of these behind-bar rooms. The poor lost women—one or two bloated middle-aged women, but most of them young women, some mere girls—young women and girls, who, if

any of them ever had a trace of beauty in their faces, have had it fearfully obliterated, sit on the benches that run round the room, by themselves, or loll against men, and dance with one another, and dirty, half-drunk, heavy-footed sailors. Some of the miserable creatures are the lowest dregs of prostitution, filthy in person and almost in rags; but others wear low-neck dresses of cheap, flashy silk, and sham moire-antique, white petticoats with worked borders, white stockings, and red boots with tassels. They leer very openly; now and then they indulge in a little horseplay, and give just a hint of the lascivious style in which they usually dance, but they have not drunk enough yet to make them utterly reckless; and so, whilst we remain, they behave as decently as they know how. Not only the sullen waiters, but the surly, silly sailors, who will be carried off by-and-bye to be robbed—perhaps literally stripped of everything—in Palmer's Rents or Tiger Bay, look relieved when we move towards the door of the dancing-room. In one case the company sends after us a *male*—rather than a *vale*-dictory “Yah-ah-ah!”

Some of the rooms have a little stage at the farther end, on which the hired performers dance and sing. The amusement provided in one room is about the most singular I ever witnessed anywhere. A zany, in a bobtailed, plaid dress-coat, is dancing about the floor,

pulling his long, bushy, false moustache, and lifting a tiny drab hat, which, being tied on with elastic, flies back to his head as often as it is lifted; meanwhile the zany sings a lot of gibberish to which not one of the people he has been engaged to entertain condescends to pay the slightest attention.

Her Majesty has given her name to a good many streets; but dirty, narrow, squalid Victoria Street, Bluegate Fields, is, we think, the one that she would feel least proud of, if she could see it. Off this dismal Victoria Street there is a double row of miserable little two-floored houses, called Victoria Court, and two of these are houses-of-call for Chinamen and Lascar opium-smokers.

"Close up, gentlemen, don't lose sight of me," says our dragoman, as we sidle in single file through a fog-choked little covered passage. Presently we reach Victoria Court, and stop outside Eliza's door. (Eliza is the original of the woman opium-smoker in "Edwin Drood.") Our dragoman calls up the pitch-dark staircase, "You at home, Eliza?" Being answered in the affirmative, he leads the way up the narrow, low, corkscrew-like little staircase—or rather, we have to stumble up it the best way we can. In a dirty little room there is a dirty little bedstead, outside the dirty clothes on which a black-moustached, swarthy Lascar, who passes for Eliza's husband, lies rolled up in a rug.



He pretends to be asleep, but now and then gives a grunt of inquiry, and Eliza answers him in his own tongue. She is a sallow-faced, carelessly-dressed woman, reclining on the other end of the bed, with her opium-pipe, lamp, &c., ready to her hand.

Some wet clothes are hung up to dry before the little fire. She is asked whether she is getting ready to go to church or chapel next day. "Ah, no," she answers in a canting whine, "that's what I can't do, but it's where I should like to go if I was prepared." When asked how she came to take to opium-smoking, she says that she can speak Hindi and Hindustani, and used to be with those that spoke them, and one would say to her, "Have a whiff," and another would say to her, "Have a whiff," and she knew no better, and so she got into the habit, and now she cannot leave it off.

In intervals between her talk she scoops out prepared opium from a little gallipot, sticks it on the needle that crosses the broad shallow bowl of her ruler-like pipe, turns the bowl to the orifice in the glass cover of her lamp, humours the pill with the spatula end of another needle to get it to kindle, and then takes a long pull,—sometimes sending back the smoke through her nostrils and her ears.

"It's very healthy, gentlemen," she says, when we remark upon its not unpleasant odour.

"When the cholera was about, nobody took it that lived in a house where they smoked opium."

There used to be half-a-dozen and more of these houses in the East-end, but the two in Bluegate Fields are the only ones now known to the police (1870). The Strangers' Home officials exerted themselves a good deal to put the others down; but lodgers in the Strangers' Home are still, during the day, pretty frequent customers at the two houses in Victoria Court.

"*Craving for drink, gentlemen!*" Eliza presently exclaims; "wanting to have a smoke, and not to be able to get opium, is a hundred times worse than that. I used to drink about as free as any, didn't I, sir?" appealing, almost proudly, to our dragoman for corroboration of her statement; "but I've broke myself of that. But if you can't get a pipe when you want it, it's like as if you was having electric shocks one after another, or as if you was having a knife scraped along your bare bones." A drachm of opium is the largest amount which Eliza owns to having smoked in a day.

Across the court and up another dark little staircase into "Johnson's" dirty bedroom. Johnson is a Chinaman, but he has an English "wife," who sits before the fire grumbling because they have to pay 4s. a week for a house that lets in the rain. There are a few dirty prints on the walls, and a little oblong



THE OPIUM SMOKER.

chimney-glass, with the backing almost worn off. On the dirty bed reclines Johnson, a corpse-complexioned, sapless-looking man, whose face twitches as if he had the *tic douloureux* until he succeeds in lighting his charge of opium. When asked *why* he smokes opium, he answers that he could not "go to *sillip*" (sleep) if he did not smoke it, and when an inquiry is made as to the number of pipes he could smoke in a day, he says five hundred dozen, if he could get them. A Chinese lodger, in Chinese costume (a slender, taper-fingered, black-moustached, almost obsequiously polite young fellow, who is sitting at a little table reading a Chinese history of the Taiping Rebellion), bares his white, gleaming teeth in a broad smile when he hears his landlord give this hyperbolical estimate of his powers. The two Chinamen cannot talk to each other in Chinese, as they come from different provinces. From what they say to each other and ourselves in "pigeon English," we gather that the lodger came over to England as a ship's cook, and is now staying to see a little of the country, supporting himself by selling penny packets of scent in the streets. At Johnson's hint he brings out the box in which he keeps his stock, and soon disposes of sundry little white and pink parcels of some atrociously sickly-scented stuff. Johnson next shows us the modicums of opium, which he sells his customers for 6*d.*, 8*d.*, 1*s.* 6*d.*, and so on, and then

taking a stickless gas-candle, he shambles off the bed and down his narrow staircase, to light us out. As he stands at his doorway and looks out into the fog, he holds the candle above his head. When the light falls on his filmy-eyed, twitching, sickly-yellow face, it looks not unlike that of a galvanised corpse.

On another night Johnson is in his ground-floor room, and calls out cheerily, "Come in," as soon as he hears us at the door. He is lolling on a bed-tick divan, made out of a greasy bed and mattress placed on the floor and against the wall. He is in high good humour, almost constantly joking and laughing. Now he takes a pull at the opium-pipe, and then he puts it into the mouth of a drowsy Lascar, who begins to smoke with his head on the legs of another Lascar who is lying as motionless as a log. Johnson manages the lamp for his lazy customer, and meanwhile smokes a cheroot. A slight Chinese sailor, who has had his dose, stands up in the middle of the room chuckling at anything and nothing. A more powerful fellow, of a negro-like complexion and cut of countenance, who says that he comes from Singapore, has also had his dose. He sits musing by the divan for a minute, and then gets up and seats himself before the fire, where he begins a song of the kind the tom-tom players sing. Johnson says, approvingly, "Nice—very good cantic," and then he and the two

Lascars and the Chinaman burst out laughing, in that dingy little hole, as if care, for them, were banished from the world.

Through the fog again, in which stray sailors and Guardsmen are reeling, and women of the town and roughs are standing at corners on the look-out for prey. When we stop before the first lodging-house we have to enter, a drink-flushed young fellow in a duck jacket staggers up, and demands, rather than begs, for money.

This lodging-house makes up more than three hundred beds for men. It was formerly a sugar-works. The ceilings, the beams, and the pillars that prop the different floors all smell of fresh limewash. The alterations are not quite completed in the lowest floor. The pavement is littered with rather uncomfortable-looking heaps of mortar. The washing-places are on this floor, and every lodger is expected to wash before he goes to bed. Here, too, is the kitchen, with a numbered locker for each inmate, and a wide range, in which, as is the case in all common lodging-houses, an almost oppressively hot fire is kept up night and day all the year round. The furniture consists of tables and forms, on which here and there a man is asleep on his back, or with his head upon his arms. The dormitories, through which we walk as quietly as we can, are big enough in length and breadth, and, of course, as they are registered, each sleeper has

his proper cubic allowance of air ; but they are low. A tall man is apt to knock his head against the whitewashed ceiling. The beds stretch away in long vistas, head to head. The bedsteads are of wood, and the lodging-house keeper maintains that if taken to pieces every now and then, and plunged into a copperful of boiling water, they can be kept freer from vermin than iron bedsteads could be. A good many of the bedsteads are already occupied ; the dark coverlets swell up like graves. Some of the occupants are snoring, others, half-awake, blinkingly watch us as we pass their beds. Here and there a man is undressing. The ventilation is good, the bedding sufficient ; but there is a lack of privacy in the great dormitories, in which men are herded like boys at school, that makes them look very unhome-like.

Across the Whitechapel Road, where the fog is so thick that passing vehicles, dimly appearing, suddenly vanishing, have a phantasmal look ; and people who want to cross, linger on the kerb, like timid bathers hesitating to take their plunge. Up, by way of Osborne Street, to the lodging-houses, which are as thick as thieves—and some of them almost exclusively used by thieves—in and about Flower-and-Dean Street. But there are comparatively respectable houses—houses that will not take everybody in—in that neighbourhood ; and in some of these there

is a degree of comfort which a stranger does not expect to find in a low lodging-house. To be able to pass the little lodge in which sits the proprietor or his deputy before his account-book, must be cheery, after a weary day in the cold streets, or wearying docks. Some of the inmates have lived in them for years as weekly lodgers; others pay half-weekly; chance-comers pay every night. The general charge is fourpence a night, or two shillings a week, for a single bed in a general dormitory. For a trifle more, a boarded-off bedroom, dark, but private, can be secured. In all registered houses the number of beds which each room is to contain is stated on a ticket hung upon the wall. In the comfortable houses it is enclosed in a little gilt frame; in the houses in which the proprietors strive to do the very least they can, it is pasted on a bit of millboard. These comfortable houses have "maple"-framed engravings along their walls, and, besides the kitchen, with cooking apparatus, and dressers covered with white crockery, a "coffee-room," with boxes, to which the lodgers can retreat when tired of the kitchen, in which each cooks for himself the food he has brought in. One of these comfortable houses is a regular warren. A row of old-fashioned buildings have been thrown into one; and if it were not for index-fingers, with verbal directions beneath, painted on the corner of every passage, a stranger might wan-

der about in it the whole day long without being able to find his way out. It must not be supposed, however, that all the inmates of these better houses are model characters. In one, a hulking tramp dogs us about, hoping first that our honours, and then that our lordships, will give him a trifle to drink our healths. In the coffee-room of the same house, a lodger of the "patterer" class leans back in his box, puts his legs on the seat, and somewhat to this effect addresses the room at large:—"My friends, we are in a place of public entertainment. Is there anything derogatory in that? My friends, there is nothing derogatory in being in a place of public entertainment, into which, as into the London tavern, any person of good moral character, or, perhaps, otherwise, can come, if he has only money enough to pay for his admission. My friends, there are gentlemen present. They may, and they may not, have paid for admission to our room; I cannot say. But, my friends, the gentlemen go about and smile, and now they laugh. *Why* do they smile and laugh? What *is* a smile and laugh? Can they not express their feelings in a way more satisfactory to *our* feelings?—put into a more substantial shape those sentiments of deep admiration and philanthropy with which doubtless they regard us?" Even in these houses, too, it is considered a great joke for a lodger to ask of our dragoman, "Who's wanted?" or for our

dragoman to say to some unseen sleeper, into whose cupboard bedroom he has peeped, "Don't disturb yourself; I'll let you go to church in peace to-morrow."

On our way to houses of a lower class—lower in character and comfort, although the charges are sometimes the same as those of the better class houses—we pass one with the whole of a lower window-sash smashed in. The dirty drab blind, inscribed with "Accommodation for Travellers," leans against the shattered frame. The mischief was done, we learn, by some ill-conditioned fellow who had a spite against the keeper of the house; and as we pass the broken window there comes out a clamour of angry voices, highly flavoured with the hottest oaths, which seems to menace the continuity of the other casement.

Whilst our dragoman is giving some local information in straight, narrow, dark, damp, dingy Flower-and-Dean Street, one of us happens to be looking through the glass of the door of the next lodging-house upon our list. There are thieves, slimly-built thieves, very shabby-looking thieves, slipping about by twos and threes, in the dimly gaslit darkness; but they can see our guide, and slip past as quietly as they can. Inside, however, eyes begin to peer curiously into the outside gloom. Presently three or four fellows make a move towards the door, and one lurches out into the

street, with a view of commencing operations on the inquisitive stranger, who is supposed to be alone. It is odd to note how disappointed he looks, how his bullying aspect collapses into servility, when he catches sight of our police-guide.

When we enter, we find that an attempt is being made at "cleaning up for Sunday." A table has been pushed askew, a form laid on it, and a man and woman are ploughing up the conglomeration of mud, greasy newspaper scraps, and litter of various kinds with which the floor is caked. At a table on one side sit a number of limp, damp, scanty-skirted, depressed women, who look as if they had been not long before fished out of a stagnant ditch. On two forms running from the fireplace sit two rows of men. The last of the right-hand row is an almost imbecile-looking young man, who is nursing a baby—a wee, sickly mite, with a pinched, pale-blue face, staring goggle-eyed out of the rough jacket of its clumsy nurse. The fire would soon roast an ox. The men's clothes are very dirty, some of them filth-sodden; herrings are being toasted, rank tobacco is being smoked, there is a stale smell of fried fish in the air; the mere memory of that atmosphere gives one nausea. When we go into the bedrooms we find one of the lodgers smoking in bed. The dragoman taps the pipe with his stick, and says, "Don't go to sleep with that in your mouth, my man."



A THIEVES' KITCHEN.

It is taken out of the mouth, but is popped into the mouth again, as ~~we~~ pass out of the further door.

One house we enter, whose deputy has to go out to buy a "halfpenny dip" to show us over the bedrooms, is almost entirely occupied by young thieves and prostitutes, ranging from youths and girls of eighteen or nineteen down to mere children. As we go in, a woman, who feels herself, or pretends to feel herself, above her company, calls to our guide, "Turn out the thieves." Thieving does not seem to be a very profitable calling, judging from the members of the profession seen here. They are eating coarse food in a foul-scented room, and are all shabbily dressed. One of the boys is without shoes and stockings, and his clothes are more like lengths of list tied on to him than torn portions of once continuous cloth. The hobby-dehoys look heavy, both in heart and mind, but the boys are merry as grigs, and sharp as needles. "We're only having a game, sir," explains the spokesman of a double row of them seated before the fire. It is a queer game. The spokesman makes a little speech, and then all the other boys hold out their hands in turn to receive a sounding whack from a weighted thong. The harder a boy is hit, the more he seems to like it. Merry as they are, however, it is most painful to see so many mere "chits of children," girls as well as boys, each on his

or her "own hook;" without any home but such a crowded den as this, earning their scanty bread by vice and crime. Surely, for our own sakes, we ought to do something for these fatherless and motherless. From the boys at any rate—acute, patient, daring—good citizens might be made. The hobbydehoys sit mum whilst we are in the house. "We are very quiet, you see, gentlemen," says our smiling guide. "*Sometimes*," emphasises one of the party, and the heavy hobbydehoys silently relax into a broad, knowing grin. "Good night, sir; good night, gentlemen," they shout after us in a tone of relief, as the door closes behind us. ❀

II.

A PHILOSOPHICAL VAGABOND.

HE was shabbily dressed, but tolerably clean, and as honest as it is possible for a man to be who, having nothing, thinks that he is not called upon to work for his living. He had a certain amount of cleverness also, and a tinge of humour, at any rate cynical quaintness, which made him rather an amusing fellow to talk with. Let him speak for himself:—

"Oh, yes, I know all that about making two blades of corn grow where only one grew before,



THE PHILOSOPHICAL VAGABOND.

but I have no ambition to be a benefactor to my species. I wasn't meant to work any more than the birds are. I was born lazy,—so I am. lazy. That's what I call living agreeably to nature. I'd a decentish education,—at least, I might have had if I'd taken the trouble to get it, but you know the saying about leading a horse to water and not being able to make him drink. However, I was always fond of reading, and am now; books that don't bother your head and make you feel uncomfortable. The South Sea Islands I used to like to read about,—pretty women and palm trees and all that, and no trouble. Captain Cook, I think it is, says that when a man has planted ten bread-fruit trees he's done his duty,—provided for himself, and his family, and posterity. I think *I* could be equal to so much work.

“It was playing truant from school gave me my taste for that state of life unto which it hath pleased God to call me. I knew I should catch the cane at last, but of a fine day, when I heard the leaves rustling, and the birds singing, and a bumble bee, perhaps, buzzing in and out of the balsam blossoms, I couldn't help it; into the country I must go. Aunt was very proud of her balsams. She kept father's house: I never had a mother to know. So into the country I did go, and loll about till I was hungry, and then it was easy enough to get as much as I wanted, and so I've found it since. My wants

are simple ; I don't object to the best of everything that's going, if it comes in my way ; but if it don't, why I can just go without. So long as I can get enough of anything I'm satisfied. It was jolly lying there and thinking of the fellows grinding away in school ; and then when they got out, refreshing themselves by playing at cricket, of all things in the world ! I'd just as soon be put to hard labour at once. My father wanted to make a doctor of me,—just fancy *me*, never having a moment I could call my own, gobbling up my meals, and going to bed afraid the night-bell would begin to ring before I could get my eyes shut. However, the last year I was at school the chap that kept it shammed to hear me read *Celsus* and *Gregory*. It was easy for both of us. He got cribs, and I found out where he stowed them away, and took the liberty of borrowing them. Of course I didn't construe *quite* perfect. I cut the year I was apprenticed. The night-bell hung in my bed-room, and when I heard it, I was expected to get up and call the governor. So it happened that pretty often I *didn't* hear it. I'd let it ring away until the folks outside got savage, and pulled and tugged until you'd have thought that wire, and paper, and bell, and wall were all coming down together. Up my master would come, putting on his clothes, in an awful rage. But I'd take no notice of him,—snore on, the peaceful sleep

of the just, till he fair shook me out of bed. 'Bless my soul,' he used to say,—sometimes it wasn't '*bless*,' for he was a very hot-tempered man,—'if ever I knew a lad sleep like this before. Wake! Turn out, you snoring pig; have you drunk up all my laudanum?'

"Sometimes, when he came back, he used to give me long lectures about the narrow escape the patients had had through his coming so late. But that didn't trouble me much: I thought it didn't much matter whether he went or not,—indeed, that the odds were that they'd be all the better if he didn't go at all; besides, what did it matter to me?

"For a time he let me go to bed at nine, instead of staying up till eleven, so that I might be readier to hear the bell; but he soon found out that that was no good. So when he stopped my two hours extra rest, I determined to cut. I was sick of pounding away with that confounded old pestle. It was so heavy that it made your arms ache, however easy you took your work. Besides, he was a deal too fond of making me trot about. When he'd no loblolly-boy, he'd send me out with the medicines, and that was so *infra dig*. I couldn't stand it. I was his pupil, not his Buttons.

"So I packed up a few things in a bundle, and started. There was only one reason why I was sorry to go away. The docter had a daughter,—a pretty girl,—about a year and a half

younger than me. She was always teasing me, chiefly about being lazy, and yet I couldn't help liking her. Though she did call me lazy, I put myself more out of my way to please her than I ever did for anybody else in my life.

"I didn't take to begging at first. It was from Harwich I cut, and at Colchester fair, when the little money I'd had in my pocket was gone, I fell in with a posturer, who tried to make something out of me in his line, but I was too old; and however well I could have done it, I'd never have taken all that trouble to earn so little. One or two other things I went in for, but I soon found that I could get all I wanted just for the trouble of asking for it. So ever since then I've lived the life of a lord, so far as work goes. They *call* me the lord, the people in my line, because I keep myself so much to myself,—I don't care about company. Of course I must sometimes mix with them in the casual wards and the lodging-houses; and when I do I make myself agreeable: I shouldn't have a very easy life if I didn't. But when I can, I like to be by myself. I don't care about drunken racket, and that's most tramps' notion of fun: I like to take things easy. When it's fine weather there's no king I'd call my cousin. I'm free to go where I please, and I've no pikes to pay or railway fare, and no hotel bill neither, except now and again for my bed. But in fine weather I sleep out of doors, and enjoy the

country night and day. Of course there are plenty who don't care a farthing for the country, except for what they can get out of it: but I'm different. If I've food and drink, and any kind of decent raiment,—I don't relish rags, and I like to go sound shod,—I am therewith content, and can find time to enjoy the beauties of nature better, perhaps, than some that think themselves my betters.

“Say it's hay-making time. Well, I get a snug corner of the field, and there I've bed and bedding, scented too, and sleep as if I lay on down. I'm not like Cheap Jack's man who caught cold through sleeping in a field. He left the gate open, you see, and so there was a draught. Well, I wake before the sun's up, and when I put my head out into the air, it's just as if I plunged it into a pail of iced lavender water. Then I lie listening to the hedge-sparrows chirping, and the blackbirds beginning to sing, and then leaving off as if they couldn't take the trouble to finish the tune; and the cocks crowing and such like. It's curious to listen to the cocks; one'll crow, and another'll answer him, and after that however many may be crowin,' those two will take no notice of the rest, but always wait for each other before they begin to crow again: it's just as if they were having an argument, or bullying one another. When one of 'em has given a special long loud crow, the other'll wait

a bit as if he was shut up at last, and then out he'll come with a longer crow, and a louder, and finish off with a flourish, as if he was saying, 'There, old boy, you beat that if you can!'

"Sometimes I hear an early goods-train going by, a dozen fields off, shrieking and panting. '*Puff, puff, puff,*' in a hurry, it'll go a score of times running, as if it had lost its breath already; and thinks I to myself, 'I'd rather *be* myself than a railway engine driver, or a railway director either.'

"Then I get another snooze, and wake up again about the time the people are coming into the field. Then I get up and shake myself, and walk off to perform my toilette and choose a breakfast parlour. I'm pretty sure to find water clean enough for a wash, in a pond or a ditch somewhere handy, or perhaps there's a little river, and I can have a bathe, or a brook I can dip my feet in to cool and strengthen 'em, as I sit by it having my breakfast. Sometimes I light a fire to boil my pot or toast a herring at; sometimes I've cold tea in my tin. Most times I can get new milk when I want it, if I'm near where cows are kept. If the girls are milking they'll give me some, if it's only to get rid of me; and if the cows are by themselves in the meadows, why I can save the girls the trouble and help myself. No, I don't call that stealing, because they'd give me the milk if they were there. If I haven't good scran, I lay in enough

for my breakfast the night before; but it isn't often I've to buy anything, and sometimes I can make a regular spread out of the things that have been given to me,—bread and butter, cold toast, sandwiches, cake, ham bones, cold fowl, fruit pie, meat pie,—all kinds of things, and they're none the worse for being a bit crumbly. When I've had my breakfast, I light my pipe and smoke it at my leisure. I haven't to rush off to take down shutters, or to perch myself on a stool and begin at a whole day's quill driving. I can take my time. If I haven't a whole newspaper with me, I'm pretty sure to find something I haven't seen before in the bits the scran has been wrapped up in. They're rather greasy, but that don't affect the reading.

“When I've done, I put on my boots and start. I've a general kind of notion of the way I mean to go, but I don't tie myself down to any particular road, and I don't stick to the dusty highway neither. I cut across meadows, and go in and out and round about, by the lanes that have got grass on each side of 'em. That's very pleasant when dog-roses are in the hedges, and the leaves are thick overhead: the country's very pretty at that time,—long grass and hay, and green corn all round about, and there's so many flowers, in the woods and the hedges, and the ditches, and in the gardens, too. I'm very fond of flowers. When I can, I sport a button-hole, as smart as I can get,—except when I'm

begging. The folks I was begging of might think I'd stolen it out of their garden, and, besides, you're expected to be very humble when you're begging,—leastways as long as there's a chance of getting anything,—and flowers 'ud make you look too jolly for a beggar that's supposed to have lost his all, and to have no time to think o' vanities. I don't beg more than I need,—just enough to keep me going pretty comfortable, and I can manage that without much trouble mostly. Some folks, of course, are screws, and some will cut up rough, and threaten to get you locked up if you're not off in two two's; but a great many people will give you something or other out of good nature. 'Well,' they'll say, 'I have no money to give you, but I can't deny you food, my poor man, if you're hungry;' and a good dollop of it, and good stuff, too, they'll give you. If that ain't money, it's money's worth to me, in two ways. It saves me buying grub, and what I don't want for myself I can sell. And those that won't give out of kindness, will if they're scared. It's curious how lonely some houses stand. You may have been walking for ever so far without seeing so much as an old black barn in a field, and then all of a sudden, just as if you'd found a bird's nest, you come upon a snug little house almost hidden in trees. But the people who live in those snug little houses don't like to have a tramp loitering

about their premises, any more than birds do to have a cat prowling round their nests, and will bribe you like to move on.

“When I’ve got enough for the day and night, I don’t trouble any more. I’m a true Christian. When I’ve got my daily bread I take no thought for the morrow, saying, ‘What shall I eat, and what shall I drink, and wherewithal shall I be clothed?’ No, I just dander on, this way and that way, till I come to what’ll make a good camping-place, and there I stop, whatever the time is, so long as there’s nobody about. I fight shy of company: it’s such a bother to have to talk,—especially in hot weather. I wouldn’t mind company now and again if it wasn’t for the talking. Why must men and women always let their tongues go clack, clack, clack, directly they get together, when mostlike they’ve got nothing to tell each other? Why can’t they be quiet like the beasts? You don’t hear bullocks begin to bellow as soon as they see each other, unless they’ve some good reason. They’ll stand quiet for hours with their heads over one another’s shoulders, and so will horses. But men and women, if they can’t find anything else to talk about, will go on about the weather, as if anyone couldn’t tell whether it was hot or cold, without somebody else telling him.

“Hot and cold,—at least cold enough to make me glad to find a barn to sleep in,—I’ve

had pleasant times by myself in the country. Comical places I've slept in, besides barns: in an old wind-mill they said was haunted, and in a church; I crawled through a window that was open, and made myself a snug bed on the floor of one of the pews with the cushions and hassocks; and I've slept in a saw-pit, snuggled up in the saw-dust; and often in an old tree, and on a cut haystack, and under a cart. Once when I was down by the sea-side, I got into a bathing machine, and the two ladies that took it the next morning didn't notice me,—they were so busy talking, I suppose,—until the horse had dragged 'em a good way into the sea (the sands there are very flat), and they were beginning to undress. When they did find me out, I was precious soon woke by their screeching. I didn't wait for the man to lug me out. Into the water I splashed, and made off as fast as my wet clothes, and the sand that had got into my shoes, would let me, soon as ever I got ashore. I was afraid that I should be pulled up: there was a bit of a shouting after me, but it was early, and so there weren't many people about, and I got off.

“Well, yes, I've been locked up before now. If a hare comes galloping right across your feet, it's human nature that you should knock it over with your stick if you can, but the law calls it poaching. But why should I mind the law? I'm an outlaw. What good do I get

from the law, that I should care for it? It isn't the policeman that protects me, but myself,—person and property both (though my property ain't much of an anxiety to me), just as if I was living in a savage land. Fruit, too, is tempting in hot weather, and when you see it so plenty in gardens and orchards,—strawberries, and gooseberries, and currants, and cherries, and raspberries, and plums, and apples, and pears,—it seems hard you shouldn't help yourself, specially since what you take can't be missed, if you're not seen taking it, and there's no one to see, as you think. Well, yes, it's possible that a tramp may now and again appropriate a stray goose, if he wants a good supper or is near a good market. Those that ain't tramps do the same when they go into London with their masters' hay and straw; at least, so I've heard. I don't make a practice of stealing geese for the London market, and, therefore, I can't tell you much about it. Not that I think there would be any harm in my taking one whenever I wanted one. As Shakspeare says—

“ ‘Steal! Foh! A fico for the phrase.’

I'm a law unto myself. I don't acknowledge your English law; I don't get any benefit from it, and I'm not bound by it. I believe in the good old law of taking what you find, and keeping what you can. As to the eggs I've fished out of hedges and ditches, I should like

to know who has a better right to them than me, according to any system o' law? Who's to prove his hens laid 'em? P'r'aps it's likely enough one man's did, but who's to prove it? And most like they'd have been addled if I hadn't taken them. Sometimes I've been put into the cage, but cages aren't over strong for the most part. If you can't get out by the door, you can by the roof. No, I was never in the stocks. I've seen stocks still standing, for I've been all over England nearly, but I don't think they're ever used now. Once, though, I saw a rare game. I was lying in a field by the roadside, close by where there was some stocks, but there was a hole in the hedge, and I saw some kind of a young parson, not a Church of England clergyman,—that was easy to see,—coming along with a young lady. I suppose they were sweethearting. Well, the young lady wanted the young man to 'explain' the stocks to her. I daresay she knew as much about them as he did, but, of course, he had to look wise, and do the polite. So he sits down and puts his legs through the holes, and she shoves down the board, and blest if she can get it up again when she tries! She tugs and tugs, but it's no go. So off she has to run into the village, half-laughing, half-crying, to get some one to let her darling out; and there he sat, looking uncommon flustered and sulky, both. A countryman came along, and the young par-

son asked him to help him out. 'Na, na,' says the yokel; 'let them take ye out as put ye in;—yow wasn't put in for nowt, I guess.'

"So away he goes, when who should come up but the clergyman o' the parish? He griined a bit when he saw the young opposition chap stuck in there; still he tried to get him out,—anyhow shammed to, but he couldn't,—anyhow he didn't. There the young fellow had to sit till his girl came back with the constable, and half-a-dozen more of the village folk, and the young chap was got out at last, and he was chaffed a bit, as you may think. He didn't look best pleased when he walked off with his young woman. But I came across them that afternoon again, looking as if the world was made o' barley-sugar, and they hadn't grown sick of it yet. I should like to know what they think of it now, if they're alive. Perhaps she wishes she'd left him in the stocks, and he wishes he'd been hanged before ever he clapped eyes on her. We manage that kind of thing a deal better in my line of life. You can have wife and children if you like, but you needn't keep 'em a day after you're tired of 'em. Ashamed o' myself? Why should I be? It's a deal better for all parties. Just think what a lot o' nagging would be saved, and mayhap murder, too, if married folk could slip their necks out o' the noose as soon as it began to gall them. Lonely? Well, that's

my own look out : for my part I like loneliness, 'cept just when I'm in the mood for company, and that ain't often ; but when I do want it, you see I can get such as suits me, and cut it just as soon as it don't suit me. Yes, I like loneliness mostly. I'm like the miller on the banks of Dee :—

“ ‘ I care for nobody, no, not I,
For nobody cares for me.’ ”

It's humbug, best part of it, all that professin' to care for other folk ; and I ain't a humbug, thank God. That's why I like the country better than town,—you can keep yourself more to yourself in the country. But, of course, we are obliged to come to London in winter to get the flats to feed us, just as the starved-out birds come up to the windows when the snow lies thick.

“ Selfish, am I ? Well, I guess I am : who ain't ? Anyhow I'm more considerate than some o' them who call themselves—anyhow think themselves—the most unselfish folk going. I've taken care that *my* death shan't leave any disconsolate friends and inconsolable widows. When I die I shan't be missed any more than the flies ; but we've a jolly time of it,—me and the flies,—for all that.”



RAG AND BONE PICKING.

III.

RAGS AND BONES.

IN the East End there is a cemetery bounded, as the geography books say, on the north by a work-house, by more masonry and brick and mortar on the east and west, and by a railway on the south. Trains are always panting or screaming past it—the shadows of their trucks, vans, carriages, engines and smoke and vapour flitting silently over the green mounds. The cemetery is so near to the line that conversations take place between workmen lounging on the viaduct-parapet and any acquaintances they may have discovered wandering amongst the tombs. Traffic rumbles, hammers rattle around the graves. The grass between them bristles with requests to visitors not to walk upon it, and notifications that five pounds is the fine for plucking flowers; whilst the walls are speckled with handbills announcing that some flower-plucker, who had not five pounds, has got seven days. There is a startling *On est defendu* on the notice-board at the entrance: to wit, that “fives” must not be played within the cemetery. The same board announces, in somewhat tout-like business phrase, that an “eligible portion” of the ground has been reserved for Dissenters.

Such a situation and such notifications might

seem to deprive this little cemetery of all the poetry of a "God's acre." Nevertheless, when I last wandered in it on a still October day, the pleasantly warm sunshine made pensive by a slight autumnal haze, there could not have been greater peace within the graveyard's walls if it had been planted in the midst of far-stretching "empty harvest fields," or in the green heart of a park, with elm boughs rustling, and sleek rooks cawing tranquilly, around the island of the dead.

"Unheard in summer's flaring ray,
Pour forth thy notes, sweet singer,
Wooing the stillness of the autumn day ;
Bid it a moment linger,
Nor fly
Too soon from winter's scowling eye.

"The blackbird's song at even-tide,
And hers who gay ascends,
Filling the heavens far and wide,
Are sweet ; but none so blends
As thine,
With calm decay, and peace divine."

That Herrick-like little gem "by a friend," trembling, like a dew-drop on an autumn leaf, on Keble's autumnal hymn for the 21st Sunday after Trinity, said or sung itself over to me as I wandered in that little cemetery, watching a robin flitting from tomb to tomb, and listening to its clear little song, and the mellow tolling of the chapel bell, whilst the yellow leaves fell slowly to the ground, and the holly-hocks and dahlias and nasturtiums, clustered round the

little lodge, basked, as if half asleep, in the sunshine.

Pale-faced little boys and girls were planting shrubs on stoneless graves—fathers', mothers', sisters', brothers'. At the head of one little grave stood a roughly home-made glazed black frame, containing the cheap photograph of an ugly little boy, and his written epitaph, with this for its motto :—

“ A mother's fondest care on earth
Is gone to share an angel's birth.”

He had not been ugly in *her* eyes. Near the workhouse wall stood a headstone with this for its sole inscription :—

“ The weary are at rest.”

Of another weary one laid to sleep there, in a nameless tomb, I have to tell. Not far off there is what was once a common. That word is linked with rural associations of broom and fern, furze and wild-flowers, donkeys and geese, and ducks paddling in sedgy ponds, gipsies' cart-tilts set up as tents, guarded by morose mongrel dogs, and sly-faced, swarthy, black-eyed women and children, whilst, in the distance, skim-milk-eyed bumpkins play at quoits or cricket in tightly-laced boots, rusty buskins, corduroy breeches and tucked-up smock-frocks.

How different is this common ! A dirty canal, that looks like some rotting reptile, stagnates hard by. In still open ground, where

grass once grew, carpets are beaten with monotonous *thud, thud, thud*, and stifling clouds of dust. Other parts of the common are turned into brickfields; a chaos of breeze-heaps, piles of red and white bricks, jumbles of spoilt bricks, unfragrant fires, swamps, puddles, ungroomed horses wearily grinding round and round, and rough-spoken men and boys who seem *autochthones*, so closely does the colour of their dress and flesh resemble that of the soil on and in which they work. A half-starved looking modern district church eyes disconsolately a spawn of cheap and nasty new houses; some with their windows broken and their door-handles wrenched off, even before they have been tenanted; whilst others of the same class are springing up fungus-like between the bristling scaffold poles. The older houses and hovels have the look of blue-moulded nuts with nothing but dust inside. Four huge gasometers, rising above the slovenly mess always to be found in the yards of gas-works, add to the amenity of the scene, and filth-furred manure and blood-works pollute the air with stench only comparable to the combined malodours of a main-sewer's out-fall and a score or two of neighbouring chimneys on fire at once.

In this dreary wilderness there existed for a time a man who made his "living" out of the rags, bones, and other so-called "rubbish" he picked up. He looked quite a decrepit old man,

but in reality he had not reached his seventieth year. It was a weary while, though, since anyone had wished him many happy returns of his birthday, and during the latter half of his life such a wish would have been a bitter mockery. Bad luck, including ill-health, had bent his back and broken his spirit. Those who cast blame on Fate, Emerson calls "vicious," and yet, being, in his own phrase, "of different opinions at different hours," he also says, "We must reckon success a constitutional trait." A good many people who have only themselves to blame for their misery rail at Fortune, but Circumstance is not *always* a "right fool's word."

"Ah, yes: poor Jack!" I have heard one man say of another. "He's a good fellow, and a brilliant fellow; but it isn't your brilliant men, it's the plodders that get on in the world." But then, although no one could accuse Tom of brilliancy, and he was a pattern plodder, he had not got on in the world any better than poor Jack.

I am not aware that the man of whom I have to tell had been brilliant, but he had been well-behaved—a respectable (in the proper sense) member of the middle-class—and it was deplorable to witness the abject poverty to which he was reduced.

When very hard up, he fed on scraps picked from the ground—dirty bits that cats and dogs, sparrows and pecking poultry, had disdained to

touch. When he could not afford to pay rent, he "squatted" in any corner, with some kind of cover to it, he could find. To make a few pence in the day he had to make long rounds, poking, like some obscene beast or bird of prey on the verge of starvation, in every heap of rubbish he came across, and every dust-hole he could get at. His clothing was not much better than a scarecrow's. He had given up all hope of rising above his wretched condition. It was as much as he could do to keep body and soul together. Sound sleep after his wearying, stooping rambles, was his great luxury in life. Perhaps he had a vague hope of enjoying a sounder sleep some day, but it was little time he had to think about the future. It was a pity-moving sight to see him limping home to his temporary lair—and, perhaps, even more pity-moving to see him setting out on his rounds. He was as bent and tottering when he started as when he came back from his beggarly-paying toil, and the sunlit freshness of the morning, in which so many were awaking to enjoyment, or the hope of it, seemed specially to flout his rags.

He was not a man who spoke much at a time, but if he could have been prevailed upon to give his autobiography continuously, it would have run somewhat thus:—

"Yes, mine is a hard life. My clothes show that, and my shoes [they were very much like

shabby ancient sandals]; but then it is the only thing that I can take to. I'm not strong enough for what they call hard work, though mine is heavy enough. I suppose I shall have to go into the workhouse at last, if I don't die first,—and I can't say I should be sorry if I did. At any rate, I want to keep out of *that* as long as I can. I don't know that there's any institution would help a man like me; if there was, I think I'd rather be as I am. I earn my own living, such as it is, and so long as I do that, and behave myself, no one has a right to order me about. No doubt, it would be comfortable to have a warm soft bed, and good food and fire and clothes certain, but I think I'd rather be as I am. I should feel cooped up and shy-like. I've got used to wandering about and being by myself. Often, except just when I'm selling my find, there don't a word pass between me and anybody else for days, I may say weeks together. Nobody is in a hurry to make friends with me, you may be sure; and I like to keep myself to myself. No; I never get teased,—at least only now and then, by those lubberly boys that would tease anything that couldn't help itself and they thought hadn't got anyone to stand up for it. People for the most part just take no notice of me, no more than if I was a ghost they didn't see."

The poor fellow had to be out in ghostly hours sometimes.

“ Yes, in the small hours I turn out in summer, as soon as I can see anything in my way lying about. Sometimes it’s fine, sometimes ’t isn’t. When there’s rain, it’s next to no use getting rags, for it isn’t often I’ve conveniences for washing and drying ’em. There is many a dog-kennel better than my lodgings; I don’t mean grand places for hounds, but just common kennels. And sometimes I’m worse off than the dogs,—I’ve got no straw. It’s nipping in winter, especially when you’ve got no fire, to turn in with nothing to lie on, and nothing to cover you.

“ Miles I walk—out and round back. Sometimes I stick to one round for a good bit. Other times, if I don’t have luck, or there’s another in my line that interferes with me, I try a new round. Yes, I come back to the old one at times, to see if it’s better to work; and if it is, I stick to it again till luck changes. No, we don’t fight about our rounds; our fighting days are pretty well over before we take to bone-grubbing. We haven’t got much to say to one another; we’ve to look to ourselves in the way of business. It’s little enough we can get at the best, and what would be the good of letting another man go shares, by telling him where you’ve done a bit better than ordinary? Oh, about other things—what have *we* got to talk about? We ain’t lively company; we’ve got no funny tales to tell. We know well enough

we're all pretty much of a muchness. We hain't had luck in life, and don't expect it; and we don't read the papers,—can't afford 'em, and don't want to. It's nothing to us who's King or Queen, any more than it is to the black beetles, or who's been a-murdering another party. It's sometimes poor neighbourhoods and sometimes rich I poke about in. In the way of food, the rich are the best. It's shameful the waste there is among servants. They'll throw away what a poor man would think a Lord Mayor's feast, if he could get it clean; good bread and meat, and cheese, and potatoes, and legs of poultry, and that like. When I was a respectable man, it would have turned my stomach to think of making a meal off the dirty things—for all my cleaning—I've eaten; but sometimes, if it hadn't been for the dirt, the things have been real good food. It's shameful, such waste is; and those who do it, mostlike, are those who were brought up hardest. They don't know what to do with themselves when they're turned into a place where they can eat as much as ever they like. Bless you, they never think of saving their master's pocket; they think it's genteel to throw his good grub away, as if it was not good enough for such fine ladies.

“But it isn't so very often I come across anything good to eat when I've washed it. Rags and bones and metal,—that's what I go

out for. Now and again I find a halfpenny, or a penny, that's been dropped ; or maybe, but that isn't nigh so often,—and neither very often,—a little bit of silver ; a three-penny bit, or a Joey. Yes, I've found sixpences, but I never found a shilling. Once I found a half-crown. I'd been out beyond Upper Clapton, and, as I was working round by the Seven Sisters' Road, I hooked out of the ditch what I thought at first was a bit of sacking, but it turned out to be the rotten half of a tweed waistcoat, and there was a hole in the lining of the pocket, so the half-crown had slipped through and slid down to the corner. That's the greatest bit of luck I ever had in the way of money finding.

“Metal's what pays best, if it's any weight; but a few rusty old nails in laths is about the best I ever come across. No ; they don't cheat us at the shops, so far as I know. They weigh fair, to the best of my knowledge. It would be a shame to cheat *us*, when we've to go so far to find so little, and get such a little a pound for it, after all. There's the sorting as well as the finding. When I was respectable I used to look down on rags and bones, and them that dealt in 'em ; but rags and bones are my living now, and if I'd got a marine store I should think myself a gentleman.

“I've been grubbing for many a year now. I hain't got strength for anything else. Once or twice I've been hopping, down by the Farleighs.

A chap made up a party, and took us down. There's money to be made at the picking; and the country air was pleasant to me, for I was country-bred. But nobody will take me now: I'm so ailing. Last time I was down in Kent I fell sick, just when I was picking up a bit of health and strength, and thought I was going to put a little money into my pocket. I'd to tramp back to London, and how I got back I don't know. Sometimes I'd to beg: I couldn't work, and I wasn't much in the way of finding anything, except, maybe, a cast horse-shoe, even if there had been any place always handy to sell at. Often I thought I should die in a ditch. So I'd to beg,—and, except starve, there's nothing goes worse against my grain. When I got back to the Borough I was pretty nigh dead beat. Somehow I turned into the market. It was afternoon, and no business doing, but the salesmen were sitting making up their accounts, with lots of baskets, full and empty, piled up round 'em. One of 'em looked up sharp, and said, cross-like, 'What are you prowling about here for?'

"So I just told him how it was with me, and when he'd given me another look, says he, 'Poor devil!' and he gave me a tanner, and that set me up again in London.

"Here I've been ever since. I've been ailing many a time since,—I'm always ailing, or I shouldn't be what I am,—but never so bad as

I was down in Kent, and coming back. My ailments just keep me fit for nothing but bone-grubbing, instead of finishing me off. I've no great wish to live, you may be sure, so long as my death came natural-like. I can't say I should like to die downright of starvation, though I've often been nigh it. If it came all of a sudden it might be different, but I know too well what the leadings up to it are like to wish to die that way.

"Yes, Sundays as well as week-days I'm out grubbing. I can't go to church, and what would be the good of my sitting moping at home? God wont be hard on me, to my thinking, when my time comes at last, because I tried to earn an honest penny on Sunday, instead of going on the parish, or letting myself be starved.

"I was a respectable tradesman once. I'd a nice little shop down at —— in Bedfordshire. Yes, most like there are people there still that knew me, and if they spoke the truth, they wouldn't give me a bad word. I don't suppose they'd wish to do, but I can't expect 'em to help me,—that's quite a different thing. What am I to them?

"I'd a large family and the doctor always in the house, and somehow, though I stuck to it early and late, my business didn't answer. I had to give up at last. My poor wife was dead then, and all my children except two,—

my eldest boy that had taken to the sea, and my youngest but one little girl. She was my pet like, for I'd no one else left at home to be fond of. I can't say what has become of Sam. After his second voyage, if he ever came home again, he never made himself known to us. Most like he was drowned, for he was a good, kind-hearted boy, not likely to cut his own folks because they were in trouble.

"When I failed my poor wife's father took my little Polly. He wasn't a rich man and he was a hard man,—very hard on me because of my bad luck,—but he was fond, in his way, of my little Polly; and so I thought it better to leave her with him, instead of dragging her up to London to rough it along with me.

"He never wrote to me, and she couldn't. When I'd got a berth of some kind I went down to — to look after my little girl. But her grandfather had left the town and taken her with him, and all I could hear of them was that they had gone to Cheadle; and when I wrote to the address that was given me there, my letter came back to me through the Dead Letter Office, with ever so many try-that and try-thises and not-known-heres, and ever since then Polly's been lost to me. Perhaps she's alive, but to me she's as much swallowed up in the sea like, wherever she be, as her brother is.

"I didn't keep that berth long, my health

was so bad. I'd to pawn myself almost bare to keep myself alive. This and that I tried, but it was no good. A poor man that's always ailing can't get on in the world, he's sure to get trodden down. Down I came to grubbing; and a bone-grubber I shall be till they rattle my bones over the stones. There's only one on earth that would go to my funeral as a mourner, and that's my Polly,—that is, if she's alive. Very like, though, she's forgotten all about me."

By a strange coincidence,—I was going to write, or rather have written, but such cases are common enough,—Polly had been living for several years not very far from her father. On leaving Cheadle her grandfather had moved to Stockport, and thence to Liverpool, where he died, and she had to go into service. The family by whom she was engaged moved south to Poplar, and there she married a man engaged in a ship-yard. By what *was* a strange coincidence she and her father did meet shortly before his death. It was not a "romantic" meeting. Yards were being closed, and shipwrights and their labourers paid off by the hundred in Poplar. Polly's husband had been out of work for a month. The fair-haired, blue-eyed, rosy-cheeked little maiden of the old man's memory had become a pale, pinched, peevish mother of many hungry children.

She could not profess any great delight at



discovering a father in the condition of an ailing old gatherer of rags and bones. Perhaps she thought that one of her many troubles was off her mind when he died.

However, she followed his coffin, as sole mourner, to its grave in the little cemetery I have spoken of, one of many unmarked graves. There, his bag and stick laid by for ever, may the old man rest in peace.

A great sameness seems to characterize the lives of these poor spiritless pariahs.

On a bright spring day I was strolling in the Holloway Road, about noon. The lilacs and laburnums in front of Loraine Place were out in coolly fragrant milk-white and pale purple, and dangling links of gold, and the imperial purple of the flowering flag flaunted in front gardens. Seated in the shade of the little trees, upon the narrow ledge of the palisaded dwarf walls, panting pedestrians mopped their perspiring brows, and fanned themselves with their hats; cabmen from the neighbouring sunny stand lounged chaffing, drinking porter out of the pewter, and snoring, curled up in apparently dislocated discomfort; and "members of the building trades," in dusty flannel and splashed duck, munched the midday meal they had extracted from their crumpled tins, smoked short black pipes, or cracked jokes

amongst themselves, quite distinct from the cabmen's impartially distributed facetiæ.

It was the fresh kind of day—delightful in itself, and full of promise of a long series of still brighter days to come—that makes a vagrant like myself long to walk on and on through London's "nation" of houses, out into the sweet country that on many sides begirdles that smudged mass of masonry, until nightfall; and at the same time makes it pleasant for him to see those whose lot is daily manual toil enjoying a parenthesis of rest. There was a holiday feeling in the air; drudgery seemed an anachronism. And whilst I thought so, my eyes fell on one of the dreariest drudges they ever beheld.

He was an old, fleshless, bent, battered man, limping on both feet, feebly fingering his eyebrows and his grey stubbly chin, and peering right and left, purblind, with (if I may perpetrate an oxymoron) a sluggish restlessness. His hat was of straw—dunghill straw it looked like, and very probably a pig had bitten out from its back brim the wide mouthful which, conspicuous through absence, gave it the look of a barber's brass basin in the last stage of verdigris, or rather black oxide. The old man wore no shirt—at any rate, he showed none.

It seems heartless to go on making an inventory of the poor old creature's rags; but it will not hurt him, poor old boy, and I want to give an idea by grouping particulars—there are few

people I have found who can or will image particulars out of generalities—of the way in which, in the “richest city in the world,” in what is called its “era of prodigal luxury,” some Londoners are still clad—of the often suicide-suggesting modes (any one who can make the barest “decent” livelihood is apt to think) in which they live, and move, and have their being: going to their bed, or their no-bed, with a measure of contentment, if they have had enough coarse food to enable them to drag through another dismal day of sordid misery. I thank God that they can get any contentment out of the cag-mag to which the maggots have first helped themselves; especially do I thank God that the poor creatures can go to sleep, and have no troubling dreams. But are such lives, lives that ought to be, must be, led? I cannot believe it. We shoot old horses when they have become a weariness to themselves. If we cannot help our pariahs, it would be a kindness, I think, to kill them off—to hand them over, in that way, to the tender mercies of the all-seeing One in whom we are so fond of bidding them to trust. But the pariah first selected for this euthanasia might probably object, otherwise he would have previously “his own quietus ta’en,” and the benevolent murderer would be strung up between the gloomy walls of a gaol, with a black flag flapping over him.

"It's a' a moodle," as Stephen Blackpool said. There are hosts of people in England wanting to be "kind." If money, freely given, and forced by law to be given, for their benefit, could only be sensibly slumped and administered, English paupers would have a balance in their favour. If the resources of this by no means "played-out" old land of ours were only developed by capital with courage enough to forego a dividend for a year or two, capital would recoup itself with fair profit, and England would not have to figure as a breeder of "paupers" in the eyes of the United States, Australia, and other British colonies. I have lived in colonies, and have been galled by the way in which the prosperous sons of English paupers sneer at England's chronic poverty. Our street Arabs have been metamorphosed into first-rate men-of-war's men, and there is still plenty of similar raw material which might be manipulated into makers of fresh national property for ex-ragged-school boys to defend.

"But this is a digression." People of the stamp of the old man I have begun to describe are infinitesimally utilisable—if national credit is to be got out of them. It is something however, to be proud of, in the midst of our pity for them, that they retain a sufficient love of independence to make them prefer their miserable earnings to alms.

The old man I saw at the corner of Camden Road wore what, after scrutiny, I discovered to be the remnants of a dress-coat—the blue, gilt-buttoned, velvet-collared swallow-tail which was fashionable in the days of my youth, a handsome quasi-naval costume which has more recently made a fruitless attempt to re-establish itself in favour. One of the back buttons—which we retain with comical conservatism, though now we wear no sword-belts—still stuck to the old coat. That enabled me, in anatomical phrase, to “reconstruct” the garment in imagination. Wear, tear, patches, grease, and weather-stains had done their worst to disguise its identity. Loss of both tails had turned it into a spencer. The bit of let-in coarse cloth that filled the place of the vanished velvet collar was grey with grease. The breast was held together by a trellis-work of knotted string. A bishop’s apron of foul sackcloth, marked with almost obliterated initials, was girt about the old man’s loins.

Beneath that apron drooped the raggedly vandyked legs of a pair of corduroy trousers, a world too wide for the stick-like human legs that showed half a foot of bruised filthy skin and bone between them and the burst blucher and loose sodden carpet slipper, sandalled with twine, in which the limping feet shuffled along. A half-full bag of canvas, cobbled with puckered clouts, was thrown over the old

man's shoulder, and he carried in one hand an old, rusty iron spud—leaning on it as he walked, to ease his corns or blistered toes and heels.

The cabmen joked him as he passed. One asked "'ow many quid" he had picked up; another begged to be remembered in his will. He took no notice, but trudged round the corner like a lame somnambulist. There was, however, some speculation even in his bleared eyes; he poked in the gutter with his spud, and fished up a drenched and draggled something, which he slipped into his bag. He looked so weary and woebegone, that if I had been the good Haroun Alraschid, I should not have asked the Charity Organisation Society to investigate his case. Not being Haroun Alraschid, I had to content myself with following the poor old fellow, whose uninterestingness had interested me. At any rate I could give him a pint of beer, if his tottering strength failed him before he reached his goal. He crossed for the Caledonian Road. The urchin sweeping the crossing spattered the old man with his broom, but still he gave no heed. To teach the young imp manners, I took a penny from my pocket, showed it to him (it was a bright new penny), and then returned it to my waistcoat, telling him that he *might* have had it if he had been better-behaved. I fear, however, that my ethical lecture was thrown away.

The young varlet bade me "be blowed," and threatened, from a safe distance, to "sarve me the same, if I didn't cut away arter my dad."

Wearily the old man trudged on, prodding here and there with his rusty spud. He turned into the Cattle Market, and pounced upon a cast horse-shoe. Friction had made it shine like silver, but friction had also made it so thin—such a mere scale of metal—that it was strange to note the anxious eagerness with which he dropped it into his bag. He groped his way into York Road, and into a street leading out of it. Here he found and probed a heap of builders' rubbish—brickbats, broken laths, scraps and damaged sheets of wall-paper, and so on. His professional "take" seemed to amount to a few nails, and the bone of a shoulder of mutton. Hungrily he eyed the dusty blade, but there was no meat on it, and it was transferred into the bag ungnawed. A minute afterwards, however, he turned up a big bit of cheese, or rather cheese-rind. It was almost black with dirt, but the foul dust seemed a mere condiment to him, as he worked his way back into the Caledonian Road by the Brewery, munching his dinner-trove.

He stopped to shift his bag from one shoulder to the other in front of the Model Prison, and I could not help thinking how much better he would have fared—dietically—if he had taken to burglary instead of bone-grubbing. Thence

he slunk his way, by side streets, across Offord Road, Barnsbury Road, Liverpool Road, Upper Street Islington, and Essex Road, into the New North Road—a drearily drab district to cross. “When was Islington ‘merry’?” the crosser is likely to ask. But there was no abject poverty in the line the old man took; and discovering no subjects for his spud, he limped on as if he thought the flat rows of houses, and struggling shops might scout him as a disreputable character.

He gave me the notion of a being whose sole peace in life was to be where no human eye could light upon him. He—electing to keep as long as he could the wretched life on earth which was his lot—must go out bone-grubbing; but even his dull face showed, or seemed to my fancy to show, that, his dreary “daily darg” got through, he wanted to hide in a hole. The wonder to me was that the hole he desired was not one in the canal he crossed by the Rosemary Branch—or a pauper suicide’s parish grave.

He doubled in Hoxton, as if aware that someone was dogging him. Accordingly, I fell back, and watched him from a greater distance. Presently he crossed Hackney Road, and turned by the church into the street which leads to brawling Brick Lane. Out of that he turned into a long, narrow, dingy street, looking very much like a canal run dry, almost every

tenement in which was a common lodging-house. Young thieves, in billycock hats and shabby black coatees, clustered at the doorways, smoking, "larking," whistling, and telegraphing my appearance to comrades further on. Bulldog-jowled roughs, with their hands in their pockets of their greasy, dusty corduroys, and some with their heads in the laps of bold-faced young women, sprawled right across the narrow pavement. They tried to trip the old man up, hailed him as "Cross-bones," and bade him make haste back to his grave. They did not withdraw their legs for me to pass—I had to step over them, and perhaps they might have tried to trip me up also, had not two policemen entered the otherwise lawless lane. Some lads who had been tossing in a court, almost hidden by crossing lines of clothes that dripped water nearly as dark as that in the gutter, scattered on the constables' approach. The old man turned into the court, and disappeared in the doorway of a shored-up hovel, with unpainted boards nailed over its windows.

"Lost anything, sir?" asked one of the constables.

"Your way, p'r'aps," supplemented the other. They looked amused when I told them that all I wanted was to see in what kind of place the old man I had been following lived.

"That's soon done," answered the first. "Just

shove the door open, and walk in. The place is as free to you as it is to him. He don't pay no rent. It'd be a shame if he had to, poor old chap, for the old house 'll soon be down about his ears. I'd button my coat over my watch, sir, if I was you. They're a queer lot that lives hereabouts. Don't do to put temptation in their way."

The "queer lot," who had seen me talking to the policemen, eyed me with sullen curiosity, from windows and doorways and entries, as I walked down the court, but they made no attempt to molest me. From the remarks I overheard, I gathered that opinion was divided as to whether I was "summun from the surveyor's," or "summun sent by Guvvurmint."

"Mind your 'ead, sir," said an exceptionally polite matron, looking out of a first-floor window in the next-door house, and feeling the rags hung out to dry on a cat's-cradle of knotted cord stretched across the court, with one above and another beneath it, as I ducked under the "flying buttress" of timber, clamped with rusty iron hoop, which almost blocked the old man's front door.

The lock was gone—the place where it had been looking like an empty eye-socket—and the bolts and one hinge had also found their way to the dealers in old metal. On its remaining hinge the door drooped sprawingly, like a broken wing. The dingy plaster of the little

passage was burst in and out, with snapped laths and hairy mortar bulging from the gaps. Through chinks in the boards nailed across the window, a little dreary light dribbled into the front ground-floor room, but the rooms behind were quite blinded. Only the stumps of the banisters were left, and so many of the stairs had rotted, or been wrenched out for firewood, that in ascending them one had to take long strides, as when mounting the steps of a ruined belfry.

There was light enough in the first-floor rooms to show them plainly. They were frightfully, disgustingly filthy. A stale scent of fried fish lingered, still distinguishable above the general loathsome fustiness, in the front room; there were ashes in its rusty grate, and herring-heads and tails on its cracked hearth.

The floor of the back room was black with damp—sodden by the rain and snow and hail, that had beaten in for many a year through the paneless frame. The front-room window was plugged pretty plentifully with rubbish, to keep out the wet and wind; but dirt-clogged, serrated fringes were all that was left of glass in the frame of this. A shingle beach of stones and brickbats, littered upon the rotten floor, showed that the window was a favourite target. Half a brick whizzed into the room while I was in it, and looking out I found that it was com-

manded from a hummocky little patch of waste ground, from which old bricks still cropped.

It was strange to see even that little bit of waste, so closely on every other side did wretched, grimy, blear-eyed old houses crowd in upon the square yard of ground at the back, almost filled by the leaky water-butt, with a dusty green scum floating on its villanous stagnant ink. Dust and damp seemed to be contending for the mastery over, or rather to have formed an alliance to blot from the earth, the miserable tenement which Cross-bones had made his home. In that back room there was a corner cupboard, the door of which had disappeared—the triangular shelves were turning to touchwood, and buttoned with those little yellow fungi which remind one so unpleasantly of decay, and the walls were weeping slimy tears.

I groped my way up to the second floor. The back room, except that it was smaller, was much such another as the one beneath. In the front room I found Cross-bones on all-fours, sorting out the orts of his morning's find, which he had shaken from his bag upon the floor. His back was towards me; he had not heard my step; before I spoke to him I had time to take in the sad little picture which he and his surroundings made.

Up there, even *there*, the spring sun shone in brightly, gilding his thin grey hairs, which

might have been cleaner. He had taken off his scare-crow hat, and was using it as a receptacle for the metallic portion of his spoil.

There was literally no "furniture" in the room, except a little earthenware ink-bottle, corded with varicose yellow veins of thinly guttered grease, and a scanty bundle of some kind of bedding huddled under an old horse-cloth in a corner.

It was such a bare, dreary, dirty hole, that the sunlight seemed not to enliven, but to flout it. Half of the window was shut, and was so bleared with dust and smut and rain—smudged together like the smears on the face of a blubbering child—that it was more effectively blinded than if it had been curtained with brown holland. The other half swayed backwards and forwards in the breeze. It was soft, and its journey over acres of grimy roofs had not quite robbed it of the sweetness it had gathered in its previous wanderings over fresh country fields; but it, and the patch of blue sky that the swaying window gave a glimpse of, and the pert plump sparrows chirping on the sooty parapet, all seemed, like the sunshine, to flout the poor old human scare-crow who was sorting his miserable goods upon his knees.

He did not start when he heard my voice; he did not seem to have energy enough left in him to start; but he looked round with a dull stare of apprehension, and recommencing the

feeble fingering of his eyebrows, said deprecatingly—

“I ain’t doing no harm. What’s up?”

When I had reassured him—at last convinced him that I was no detective who had been dogging him, to apprehend him on some dreadfully false charge (I found that, as I had guessed, he had noticed me following him, and doubled to avoid me), we got into talk. His mode of speech was peculiar. It was often ungrammatical and “cockney,” though he did not drop his “h’s,” but still it sometimes sounded as if he had once associated with people of a higher social grade than street folk.

What he told me about himself was given in no consecutive narrative, but in reply to questions.

“If it’s no offence, I s’pose I needn’t say where I was born. There can’t be many, I should say, as belonged to me livin’ there now—none, p’r’aps, for I’ve been a weary while in London. Still, there might be, and they wouldn’t like to know I was brought to this. No, nor I shouldn’t like ’em to know it neither. I’ve got that bit o’ pride left in me. What I used to be can’t matter much to you. I was never what you might call rich, but I’d as comfortable a little home as a man need wish to have—once. And I’d friends, and I’d a family. Children and wife both was very fond of me—yes they was. And I lost it all. ’t’wasn’t my fault. I

wasn't born to be lucky, only jest at startin'. No, my wife didn't die. Yes, she must be dead by this time, I should say—but 'twasn't that. We won't talk no more about her. 'Twas she as did it. And yet I was a good husband. And she was a good wife—once—poor gal, I won't deny that. If them as comes interferin' between such as her and me was to have their necks wrung—but, there, I won't talk no more about her. After that everything went wrong. Well, yes, I won't deny it, I did take to drink, now and again. How was I to help it? My life had been none so pleasant that I wanted to be always thinkin' about it. And the children were taken from me. They were taught to look down on me, they were, sir. They'd never ha' done it of their own accord, poor dears. The two littlest died, and I wasn't let in to see them. *They* were fond of me anyhow. They loved me better than they did their mother, though they were only bits o' babies. I don't know what's become o' the rest. Their little uns might have little uns by this time—if they didn't die afore they were married. Good job if they did. If I'd never married—leastways as I did marry—I might ha' been mayor, perhaps, by this time.

“It's a poor look-out, marryin' is—to them as hasn't luck. Courtin' and makin' yourself agreeable jest to get made a fool of! 'Twasn't my fault, and yet they all looked down on me.

I hadn't a friend left. I couldn't stand it long. I'd been respected once. Yes, I had, sir, though you mayn't think it. I couldn't stand bein' looked down on by everybody; I'd that bit o' pride left. And not a soul that cared twopence for me. I cut. Not that there was anybody as wanted to stop me. I got a kind o' clerk's place on a wharf at first. I was good at figurin'—once—and I'd my own money to figure. But I couldn't keep the berth. My luck was against me. Well, yes, I did drink—at times; I won't deny it. How was I to help it? I'd drink now—only I can't. Oh, yes, I'd touch the drink fast enough—only I've got no money to buy it. It's the only comfort left me.

"All sorts o' things I turned my hand to—when I'd the chance. I never wanted to be beholden to nobody. But I'd my bad luck tied round my neck. I never could git on at anything—for long. Sure as ever I began to fancy I was goin' to git a bit more money at anything, I lost it. It's no good fightin' agin your luck. There's some as couldn't help having everything to their hearts' content if they was to try ever so, and there's some as'll be poor beggars all their life, whatever they may do. 'Tain't my fault. I never did anybody harm. It's my luck. When your luck once changes, it's all up.

"I didn't start bad. I'd a good business, and I was liked by everybody pretty well—once; and now this is what I've come to.

There ain't a man, or a woman, or a child in the whole world that would care a fig if I was to die to-morrow. It's all right, I s'pose. That's how things was meant to be. Anyhow, that's how it is. I was made to be thought little on—pushed about and chaffed by fellers that ain't half a quarter as respectable as I was—once. And them that ought to know better are every bit as bad.

“T'other day I was comin' along the Liverpool Road. There was a chap shovellin' up the slush into a mud-cart, and he sent a shovelful pretty nigh all over me. Him and his mate bust out laughin'. ‘Hope I haven't spoilt your clothes, governor,’ he says. And a young chap that fancied himself a swell was goin' by, and says he, ‘There's no fear of *that*,’ and bust out laughin' too, and so did the gal he was walkin' with. How would they have looked if the mud had gone over their fine things? A big butcher chap sung out shame, and told me to punch the scavenger's head, but he was jokin' of me just the same. It's all luck. There's folks as can take care o' theirselves, and so they don't git meddled with. And there's old chaps like me as was made to have mud thrown over 'em, and git laughed at into the bargain. It's all right, I don't doubt. Anyhow, that's how it is, and I can't alter it.

“No, I don't know that I've any particular wish to be dead. If things is so here, things

may be jest the same there, for what I know, so what would be the good o' dying? I should like to be sure I should have enough to eat, and git a drop o' drink now and then. That's what I should like to be sure on. Oh, yes, I used to go to church—once. Yes, the parsons used to talk like that you're sayin'. I *ain't* one of His works, I s'pose. Anyhow, the tender mercies ain't come my way. No, I never had no luck in my findin' neither. There's some pick up pocket-books and shillin's. Leastways, so they say. But that ain't my luck. If I find a bit o' clean rag—and that ain't often—I think myself well off. Rusty iron nails is what comes my way, though t'other chaps gits pewter and such.

“There's a chap goes out Hackney way, round where the new houses are. *He's* always safe of his meat. He climbs over a garden-wall, and works a dust-bin before the folks are up. Mutton-chops with only a bit out of 'em, and a turkey-leg he's found in there. It's the servants that is so wasteful, goin' about dressed up like ladies of a Sunday, and flingin' away their turkey-legs, and their old fathers and mothers at home never tastin' butcher's meat, 'cept what is given to them at Christmas. I s'pose it's all right, but it do seem hard that strong lazy young gals like them should be turnin' up their noses at good food, and old chaps like me, that was respectable once, can't

git a crust. It's all luck. A bit o' dry bread 's about the most *I* ever got out of a dust-heap, and glad enough I've been to git it.

"Round about Holloway and Hornsey, where the building's going on, I'm working now. Hundreds and hundreds of houses they've got there, where there was only green fields when I came up to London, and still they keep on building, smarter and smarter. There's some folks can git on in the world. I've to git up before the swells go to bed, for I ain't nimble on my feet, and it's a long way I have to go to git to my work, and then it's a long way I've to go about before I can pick up enough to keep soul and body together.

"I don't know what I should do if I hadn't found out this place, for I couldn't raise the money for a bed at a lodging-house. There's others that comes and sleeps down below, but they never interfere with me.

"No, sir, I'm tellin' you the blessed truth. There isn't a soul in the wide world that cares a snap o' the finger for me—'cept it's the sparrers there, when I've got a crumb to give 'em."

IV.

THE BIRDCATCHER.

“No: I dont ’old with this new hact about Small Birds. It’s on’y another bit o’ the swells’ spite. They aint satisfied with nobblin’ the game birds. No: they must keep poor men from ’avin’ singin’ birds, and other poor men from makin’ their livin’ by ketchin’ on ’em. It’s jest a bit o’ spite, I tell ye. Stuff an’ nonsense about ’sterminatin’ on ’em: birds breeds a deal too free an’ is a deal too sharp for that!

“Look at sparrers now, how they swarm right in the wery ’cart o’ Lon’on. the cheeky beggars; they’s ’sterminated, isn’t they? An’ yet you can git your money out o’ sparrers, too. It don’t come to much a bird, but then they’s so plenty, that makes up for ’t.

“I don’t ’old with sellin’ sparrers to children jest to be tormented,—I ’ate cruelty as much as any man; but I can’t see as there’s any more ’arm in ketchin’ sparrers for the sparrer matches than there is in breedin’ pigeons for the swells’ pigeon matches. What beats me is that in a place like Lon’on where sparrers is so plenty, folks should let theirselves die o’ starvation, so long as they could git a bit o’ fire anywheres to cook ’em at. Why in any back-

yard you could ketch a lot o' sparrers wi' an ole sieve, an' they aint bad eatin' when they're plump. I've tried 'em jest to see. Of course, there ain't much on 'em at the plumpest, but then you can eat a lot, and crunch 'em up, bones an' all.

"There's another bird ain't much of a song-bird,—leastways, some folks says it's got a sweet little pipe of its own, but if't has, it's like the donkey's gallop, uncommon short as well,—an' that's the robin. Well, when I was a young un, a good many would'nt ketch 'em, though you could git a good price for 'em.

'Cock Robin and Jenny Wren
Is God Almighty's cock an' hen,'

we used to say. But we've got to ketch robins now. The stationers an' the ladies wants 'em, not for the song, but for orniments. Well, that ain't our fault: blame them as will have 'em cotched, not us as doesn't want to ketch 'em.

"Yes, I've heard about chaffers bein' blinded with red-hot needles to make 'em sing better, but I never see it done, an' if 'tis done 'taint our fault. We ketches the birds to turn a honest penny, an' sells 'em to the shops, or them we thinks will treat 'em well an' git some fun out on 'em, an' no 'arm to anybody: if they don't, that's their look out not ours. But you won't make me believe in a 'urry that

them as fancies birds treats 'em bad. You see what smart cages they gits for 'em, an' how clean an' bright they keeps 'em, an' how they buys sand, an' seed, an' turfs, an' chickweed, an' gr'unsel. An' don't the birds like their cages neither? Jest hear 'em sing! Why there they are, got board an' lodgin' without a mite o' trouble; an' in the winter, when the birds as isn't cotched goes shiverin' an' starvin' about, they're warm an' snug an' sure of a bellyful.

"Why if we wasn't to ketch birds there's 'undreds in Lon'on would never 'ear the sound o' one, and don't it cheer a sooty old street up to hear a lark singin' in it? Out by the Dials there's a man, not one o' the dealers, but a tradesman, has got four 'ung up outside his 'ouse,—I ain't sure as it ain't six,—and it does your heart good to 'ear 'em all pipin' away together. They pinin' in captivity, indeed! Bosh! They're as jolly as sandboys.

"Look at a goldfinch, too: he mopes, don't he? or a bullfinch? or you hear a thrush or a blackbird singin' in a court as jolly as if they was in the country. Instid o' bein' run down, we ought to be made much on as benefactors of our specie, we bird-ketchers ought. We 'arn a honest livin', an' while we're doin' on it, we gives a lot o' pleasure to them as pays us an' to them as don't. That's more than a loryer can say, any'ow.

“Nightingales? Yes, I ketches ’em when I can, an’ wish I could ketch ’em orf’ner; but it’s ’ard work, and you’ve to go a goodish step out mostly. Sometimes they come near Lou’on way, where there’s a bit of a park, an’ then what a precious row there is if you lure ’em out. What’s that but selfish, I’d like to know. The swells wants to keep ’em all to their greedy selves. They belong to me every bit as much as they do to the swells, if I can on’y ketch ’old on ’em; an’ I sells ’em where more’ll ’ear ’em than if they stayed where they was; an’ if I *do* make a shillin’ or two by doin’ on it where’s the ’arm o’ that? The money don’t come out o’ the swell’s pocket, and it’s a ’ard thing if a man mayn’t arn a honest livin’ jest because he’s poor! All the more reason why he shouldn’t be stopped from arnin’ his livin’! Now there’s some o’ the swells ’as got plenty,—leastways it ought to be,—an’ yet they want more, an’ they ain’t by no means partic’lar whether it’s honest or not, the way they gits it.

“Well yes, some says cotched nightingales beats theirselves to death agin the wires, but there’s plenty as doesn’t. They takes to the cage kindly enough, an’ good reason why, when they’re well treated. Look at canaries. They was wild birds somewheres once, an’ now they’re all bred in cages, an’ yet you’d say they was pretty jolly. There ain’t a jollier

bird goin'. It's my belief it's doin' a bird a kindness gittin' it into a cage, so long as you feed it well, an' keep it clean, and make friends wi' it, and don't let the cat git 'old on it. Law bless ye, I'd a canary 'ud perch on my 'ead an' tweet down sarcy at the cat, as if it was darin' of her to fly at it; and if I hadn't a-been there, the cat wouldn't ha' dust to touch it: the canary knew that well enough.

"Now look'ee 'ere. Inside o' a house there's one cat, say, as may be a henemy to a bird, but may easily be perwented, an' everybody else in the house is the bird's friends. Well, now, if that there bird was flyin' about on its own 'ook outside o' the house, 'ow many henemies would it 'ave, and nobbudy to give it its grub nayther? There's reason in everythink, if you'll on'y look for 't, an' them as runs down bird-ketchers hasn't got it all their own way quite so much as they thinks p'r'aps.

"No, I *ain't* ashamed o' my business. I took to 't early, an' I've stuck to 't late, an' I 'ope I shall be able to go out ketchin' a year or two more, please God. What I shall do when I can't, if I should live so long, I am sure I don't know. I can't turn my 'and to nought else, an' I'll go bail I should pine away, as you call it, a deal sooner in the 'ouse than a bird would in a cage. They don't pet old paupers. Instid o' givin' on 'em rape seed, when they're mopish, they stop their baccy.

“No : I hopes God will give me the use o’ my limbs ’s long as I’ve got breath in me, an’ ’s long as I can crawl I’ll go ketchin’. Them as likes may call it a wagabone’s life ; I say it’s a gen’leman’s life, an’ I knows more about it than they does. You’re your own master : nobbudy can’t order ye about,—leastways not till this hact come in,—’cept ye are trespassin’ an’ then it’s easy enough, if cheek and chaff, won’t do it, to git a better pitch, or if you can’t to come back to where you was afore. Trampin’ in an’ out ’s the hardest work, an’ what’s that ? Good ’ealthy hexercise an’ nice fresh hair, any’ow in the country. You ’aven’t to be ollus in a drive to arn your bread, like the poor fellows as works in Lon’on. You can take your time, an’ smoke your pipe, if you like, an’ loll about on the grass like a sofy, and then, if you’ve luck, jest one pull may’ap brings ye in more than them poor critturs gits for slavin’ all the week long in Lon’on, an’ sent scurryin’ from pillar to post, an’ gittin’ blackguarded into the bargin as if they was pickpockets. No : it’s a gen’leman’s life is a bird-ketcher’s. You fills your pocket an’ takes your pleasure at the same time ; an’ ain’t that jest what the gen’lemen does as shoots their game, an’ then sends it up to be sold at Leaden’all ? Where’s the diff’rence I’d like to know, ’cept that we’re better off than the swells : we ain’t to keep no keepers an’ that.

They're out o' pocket whatever price they git, but our game 's pretty nigh all clear profit when it's sold.

"Yes, I've sold birds' eggs as well as birds, but takin' eggs for a bird-ketcher mostly is sp'ilin' 'is markit. You can git more for a bird than a hegg, an' birds is easier to come at. Sometimes they're shy enough, but other times, if you've a good call-bird or can whistle well yourself, they'll walk right into the net for all their sharpness. 'Taint orfen I goes to church. I've to work o' Sundays as well as week-days, if you can call it work. There's a good sale of birds in the beginning o' the week, but the worst on it is some as 'as their own trades in the week takes to ketchin' on the Sunday, which don't seem exackly fair to us as 'as to make our livin' on it. Sich as them, I says, ought to keep the Sabbath day wholly. Hows'ever now an' agin I've been to church, though not orfen. Once was a bitter cold day. I was 'arf perished, an' I went into a church where I see a lot of people, jest to git warm, an' a nice snug seat up by the stove I got. I couldn't stay out in the fields, though the birds was so tame you could ha' cotched 'em by puttin' salt on their tails; I do believe they would ha' pecked crumbs out o' your 'and, an' 'twould ha' been a charity to take 'em. I got a goodish pull, an' then I went to church. Well, what d'ye think the parson

read out 'In vain is the snare laid in the sight of any bird.' Why, bless your 'eart, the birds I'd cotched see me pitch my net plain enough, but into it they flew in a minute,—I'd no need to lay down. I s'pose they wanted to git warm, like me at church, or else they see the call-bird's seed.

"Well, yes, take 'em all round, bird-ketchers, I should say, is a decentish set o' chaps, though they do call us wagabones an' 'tain't orfen we goes to church. Some of us takes our drops at times, like other folk; but then, you see, we must be up betimes good part o' the year, an' them as has got to rise hearly can't orfen afford to go to bed late; so I should say there's a good few, as a old Scotch chap I know says, worse lushingtons than us.

'Hearly to bed and hearly to rise
Makes a man 'ealthy, wealthy, and wise.'

"I'm 'ealthy enough, thank God, an' it's my belief it's the ketchin' 'as made an' kep' me so. I've never 'ad the rheumatiz, for all the fog and frost and snow I've been out in. I can't say much about the wealth and the wisdom."

V.

MILK IN THE MALL.

LONDON nowadays is being pulled down and built up again on so extensive a scale, and the new buildings are so unlike the old ones they supplant, that many parts of the huge city we see are as identical with those places as we remember them, as the knife that had been rehandled and rebladed, and the gun that had received new lock, stock, and barrel were with the original weapons.

Both sanitary and architecturally these changes, no doubt, are generally for the better; but still they play sad havoc with associations. The places in which the present has grown out of the past, like fresh spring leaves from an old tree,—not smothered it as tropical climbers choke and bury the stems to which they cling,—are daily becoming more scarce in London. Of those that are left one of the most interesting is St. James's Park. A great deal of history is crowded together there.

The other day, through lines of sleet-flecked spectators, so closely packed that they protected one another against the cold, the Queen rode along the Mall to open Parliament. On another winter day another monarch, who was very reluctant to open Parliaments, was marched

along the Mall from what had been his palace of St. James's to suffer death in front of what had been his other palace of Whitehall. Henry VIII. built St. James's Palace on the site of a leper hospital. The dreary marsh on which the luckless lepers looked out, with heads bowed like its bulrushes, has become St. James's Park, on whose well-worn lawns in fine weather at the present time lounge lazy roughs, almost as physically loathsome as the lepers, and far less cleanly in their speech, and grubby little children from grimy courts hop about and sport and wrangle, as pert and black as London sparrows.

Cromwell, when he lived at the Cockpit, used to be carried into the park in a sedan-chair, a vehicle which somehow seems too effeminate for him. Charles the Second threw the park ponds into one, fed his ducks in it, and skated on it. In old maps, "S. James' Parke" is a sparsely timbered enclosure, stocked with deer. The merry monarch planted it with Boscobel acorns, and laid out broad walks, in which he played at ball, hung up birdcages, and strode along with a pack of yapping spaniels at his heels. Nell Gwynne lived on one side of the park, and Milton on the other. James the Third was born in St. James's Palace. Heavy Anne used to live there, with her heavier husband. Hard by lived the duchess who could tyrannize over her sovereign, and dictate to

her own almost omnipotent lord. A gentler tenant is now the mistress of Marlborough House. The formality and the free-and-easiness, the dulness and the wit, the selfishness, the prodigality, the shameless vice and the somewhat humdrum virtue of the Georgian times, can all be illustrated by anecdotes that cluster about St. James's Park. On its parade the Foot Guards muster between mementoes—the Turkish gun and the Seville mortar—of our war with the great Napoleon. The Life Guards and the Blues brighten up the pepper-and-salt Horse Guards as they sit motionless as statues on their magnificent chargers, or stalk through the dusky corridors with clank of spur and sabre. Hard by are the Admiralty and the new Government offices, and above the trees can be seen Westminster Abbey and the Houses of Parliament. Even the old women who sit beside their cows opposite the spot where Carlton House once stood are in a measure "historical," as being the successors of the syllabub-sellers of Spring Gardens. (There is very little of the vernal or the jovial in the present aspect of that drab, official quarter.) Little, however, did old Patty Morgan, who used to dispense glassfuls of milk in the Mall, a cheery-faced old body, muffled in a faded Welsh plaid shawl, think of the historical associations of her place of trade. This was her history:—

"Oh, deary no, I've got no cows. It's my

master's I take to the park, sometimes one and sometimes another, just as may happen. It's a many years I've been in London : yes, indeed, with one master and another. I used to go out with the milk for ever so long, but I'm too old for that now. I've borne the yoke in my youth, and now I get a bit of rest in my old age, not but what it's very cold sometimes sitting in the park ; but what's the good of grumbling ? I couldn't lug about those heavy pails now. When I was younger the saucy monkeys of boys used to make fun of me and say I waddled like a duck ; so I'm thankful I've got something I can do. When I'm not milking I can knit, and it's a comfort to an old woman not to be always on her feet, and to have something to lean the back against.

"Our business varies very much. Sometimes we'll do next to nothing, and then again we'll sell about as much as the cow can give. It depends so much on the weather, you see. A fine day brings the folks out like butterflies.

"It's mostly children we sell to. A father will come with his little ones and treat them to a glassful each, and sometimes a nurse will be sent regular with a child that is ailin', so that it may drink new milk and smell the cow's breath. Certainly the milk is better than what's sold at the doors ;* yes, indeed.

* This statement was made before the " Adulteration Act " was passed.

Oh yes, you can get pure milk from the milkmen if you want it for an invalid; they'll not cheat you, but go out of their way in a case like that, to send you the best they can,—but then, you see, you've to pay more for it. Milk was so plenty where I come from that it puzzled me at first, it did, the price they gave for it in London. Sheep's milk we used most, but we'd cow's milk as well, and as much as ever we wanted. A child wouldn't have thought much of a glass of milk there,—it wasn't any treat: I'd only to run into the dairy and help myself.

“I remember one little Miss that used to come to me in the park,—a sweetly pretty little thing; but when I first saw her I didn't think she was long for this world. Just like a fading flower, she was. Her papa and mamma were English, but they'd been living in Scotland, and she'd been born there, at Edinburgh; and then they'd moved to Glasgow, and the bad air, the maid said, had pretty nigh killed the little dear.

“The maid was Scotch, and it ain't often you'll find any one that is, run down anything belonging to Scotland before them that ain't; but this girl seemed downright to hate Glasgow, because her little pet had been so bad in it. Every morning almost she brought her, for a long while; and a poor little pale, pinched thing she was at first, all skin and bone, with not a bit of colour in her face, except her big

blue eyes; but before midsummer she'd plumped out wonderful, and was as red as a little rose. My little granddaughter used to say she looked like a fairy out of a pantomime. They dressed her in blue and white, and she'd a hat with a wreath of forget-me-not round it, and she was a sweet pretty child when she'd got her colour back. I used often to wish that my poor little Mary had got such another. She was ailing then, and it wasn't long before she died, like her poor mother. I can thank God now that He has taken them home to Himself,—yes, indeed. They're safe housed, nothing can harm them now, with God eternally shut in; and it can't be so very long before I shall see them again, please God, and have no more trouble neither. But I was very lonely at first, when I'd lost them both. I haven't a relation in all England, as far as I know. I suppose there must be some one of some kind left belonging to me in my native place; but it's years and years since I was there, or had any word of it. Yes, sure, I come from Wales. My son-in-law went abroad with his family, half-a-dozen years ago, and I've never heard from or of him since. We'd never took much to one another; specially when he married again so soon after my poor girl died; still she'd been fond of him, and so he seemed a bit of a link with her left. I had her dear little girl a good deal with me here, at home and in the park, when her father had

married again : and she always went with me to my chapel on a Sunday. It's astonishing how fond she was of everything good for so young a child. She'd sit as still as a little mouse listening to the sermon, and she could tell you what it was about, too ; and she never fidgetted at prayers, as most children do ; but it was the hymns she liked best. She could sing like a little angel, and she looked like one too then, with her eyes on the ceiling, as if she could see right through it into heaven.

"They didn't behave to her bad in her own home. Her father would give her a little treat now and again, take her to the theatre, and such like, though it wasn't much she cared for that kind of thing ; but when the other little ones began to come, my little Mary began to think she was one too many. There is no making up for the miss of a mother, however kind you be ; and the new wife was a bit snappish, and, natural enough, loved her own children best. So Mary came more and more to me, and I dare say, if she'd lived, she'd have come to me for good, and a comfort it would have been to me : yes, indeed. But it wasn't so to be ; and she's better where she is, dear child.

"I remember the last time she was out with me. I was lodging in Stangate then, and she was going to sleep with me. She'd been getting weaker and weaker for some time past, and so I stopped on the bridge to let her get her

breath a bit. It was a beautiful moonlight night,—the river was like silver, and she stood looking down at it, and up at the sky, as if she couldn't say which was prettiest. But there came a cloud over the moon, and she was very disappointed for a bit. Presently she says, 'Granny,' says she, 'but there won't be any dark when we get up above the clouds, will there, Granny?'

"Yes, indeed, those were the very words the dear child said, and often I've thought of them since, now she's up there herself. She took to her bed the very next day, and died in my place in about a fortnight afterwards. Of course her father and his wife came to see her, and the neighbours were very kind when I had to be away; but I'm glad I could be with her when she died.

"She'd been having a hard struggle. It made my heart bleed to see her fighting so, and loth though I was to lose her, I opened the door that the spirit might escape. I'd scarce done it when she opened her eyes, and gave me a sweet little smile, and then she flung her poor thin little arms round my neck and died kissing me.

"It was a bitter trial, yes, indeed; harder, I think, even than when her poor dear mother died, though that was hard enough, for she was my youngest daughter,—the only child that had been left to me.

“Yes, it’s a bitter thing for a widow to lose her only child. There was a poor dear lady used to come to the park with hers, a year or two back. The poor girl was in a decline, and so she came to me and bought milk. I don’t know why they always came to me, except that they happened to come to me first, and we’d a little chat, and somehow it came out that I was a Welsh woman and a chapel-goer, and so were they; and afterwards we often had a talk about Wales and a country that’s better than that. They’d just come back from Wales when I first knew them. They kept a little school in Kennington, I found out, and they’d been spending their holidays in lodgings, down in the poor girl’s native place,—leastways, her father’s. It wasn’t so very far from mine, and I knew well enough that they could have found only very rough lodgings there. They were real ladies to talk to, but poor enough, I should say. The old lady never had a hole in her gloves, nor a rent, nor a ravel about her anywhere; but her black was turning rusty. Still she always tried to keep her daughter as nicely dressed as she could; not smart, you know, like the servant girls, but as neat and pretty both as her purse would afford. It didn’t much matter to her, poor dear girl, what she was dressed in: death was written in her face. One day I met the old lady by herself, and made bold to ask after

her daughter. The poor creature could not answer me, though she tried to look kind. She just shook her head, and burst out crying, and walked away without being able to say a word.

"No: I don't always see gloomy things in the park. And after all, though it's hard to part with those we love, why should we be gloomy about them if we think they're gone to a better place, where they, at any rate, can never be gloomy any more?"

"There's often a good bit of fun and frolic about the cows, and folly too with the soldiers and the young men out with their sweethearts; but if they and the girls never drank anything worse than milk, there wouldn't be so much harm come of their courting.

"As I've told you I used to go milk-walks before I got hired to milk in the park. It's a tiring work that, carrying round the pails, and you're out in all weathers; still I always kept my health pretty well whilst I was at it. I don't drink gin, as some do, to keep the cold out: coffee in the morning and tea at night, that's what I take.

"You hear a good deal of news on a milk-walk: well, yes, no doubt a good deal of it is lies. Either the mistresses or the maids are ready enough to gossip with you. Give and take, that's their motto: hear what you've got to say, and tell you what you don't know

about the neighbourhood. If some of the masters and mistresses that think everybody thinks them the respectablest of the respectable could hear what their own servants say about them, they would be rather astonished; and they wouldn't be best pleased either if they knew how these stories get about from house to house,—about the quarrels, and the lots of spirits that's drunk on the sly, and the gentleman that master doesn't like calling so often, when he's out, on missis, and all that kind of talk. No doubt a good half or more of it is made up. Folks that are so fond of talking, as most servant girls are, must tell lies pretty often, or they couldn't keep their tongues wagging as they do.

“And then it's queer the different things that are happening at the different houses you call at. At one, mayhap a new baby has just come, and the bailiffs at another; there's a wedding at No. 3, and somebody dying next door, and a hearse and mourning coaches going away from No. 7.

“Houses, too, that are pretty near as like as peas outside are so different when the door's opened, in masters, and mistresses, and servants, and children, and furniture, and cleanliness, and everything. One may be as neat as a new pin with nobody but nice people in it, and the next all muddle and muck and wrangling.

“It was my father’s misfortunes sent me up to London. He had a farm out by Pont-y-pridd, and he was forced to leave it, and it broke his heart, poor old man : he died just in time to save him from the workhouse. I’d been promised to a young man who had a good place at Merthyr,—not one of the common workers, but a kind of over-looker. He wasn’t true : he broke with me when our troubles came, and married my own cousin. I couldn’t stand that,—to see them coming backwards and forwards to uncle’s,—so I came up to London ; and here I’ve been ever since, this many a year.

“After a bit I married a man who worked for one of my masters. He made me a fairish husband, poor man, though he never made much pretence of loving of me, and he was rather too fond of liquor. We’d a large family, and I’d to work for them ; but, thank God, they were all dear, good children. None of them lived to be married, except the youngest ; and now she’s gone, and her little one : so I should be all alone if I couldn’t say, praise God, ‘Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil ; for Thou art with me ; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.’”

VI.

THE FLOWER GIRL.

" I DUNNO who my father was : mother's dead. I live at aunt's,—that's Missis Slinn's, mother's sister. O' course aunt can't keep me : she's got a lot o' kids of her 'own, an' sometimes they can't git anythink to eat, though she works 'ard. Now an' agin she'll give me a bit o' bread, an' she'll ollus let me sleep at her place, if I git back in time. If I don't, sometimes I goes to a lodgin' 'ouse, an' sometimes I sleeps in the streets, if the weather aint too cold. That's nicer than aunt's when the weather's 'ot. The 'eat makes the little uns fractious, an' they wakes up and kicks an' squeals.

" No, we don't say no prayers,—what's the good ? Yes, I've seed women at the lodgin' 'ouses, kneelin' down by the side o' their beds, mornin' and evenink both, but not orfen,—where's the good on it ? When I goes to bed I wants to go to sleep, and when I gits up I wants to go to work. No, I hain't no call to complain o' aunt. What call 's she got to do more for me than she do ? There's many as wouldn't do as much. I've got to 'arn my livin', like other gals.

" What can it matter to you where we live ?



THE FLOWER-GIRL.



You ain't a-goin' there, are ye? Sometimes one place an' sometimes another: we're summut like the sparrers. It dont take aunt long to pack up 'er sticks. I don't mind tellin' you where 'tis she's staying now, if you've got anythink to give 'er. Yes, work o' course, or money either if ye're inclined to,—she won't make no objections. Charin' she'll do, or any rough work she can put her hand to. She ain't afraid o' work, like some folk: mother worn't neither, I've heared her say. I can't abide them lay-a-bed sleepy heads, though of a winter's mornin' sometimes I wouldn't mind layin' in bed a bit longer iustid o' turnin' out into the cold. I don't care so much, though, if I can git a cup o' cawfee. That warms ye up famous, 'specially if ye can run to bread-an'-butter.

“Lor bless ye, I can't rec'lect much about mother: she died when I was quite a little un. Tiepiz she died on. I can't say whether she was fond o' me or not,—how 'm I to know? Anyhow, if she was, it don't seem to ha' done me much good. I can't see as it would ha' made any diff'rence whether she'd lived or not. If she 'ad, I should ha' 'ad to 'arn my livin' as I'm a-arnin' on it now.

“Well, may'ap, she might ha' guv me a bit more to eat than aunt does, an' ha' 'elped me with my clo'es. But who's to tell? Some treat their own children a deal wuss than aunt

treats me. I've known mothers and fathers, too, as wouldn't let their kids keep what they made,—took it all from them, if they was flats enough to give it up, an welted 'em if they 'adn't brought home as much as it was 'spected they ought to ha' done, an' never give 'em grub enough neither.

"Now I'm a deal better off than that. Aunt lets me keep all I gits, an' don't charge me nuffink for my bed neither. To be sure it don't cost her much, for there's three or four on us in it.

"No, I don't 'elp aunt wi' the young uns. I gits up too early and comes 'ome too late for that. Sometimes one of the eldest gals hasn't got anythink to do, and then she's kep' at 'ome to look arter the children.

"How old's the eldest,—what o' them as is gittin' biggish, do you mean? Well, I'm sure I'm more than a year older than Jemimer, though Jemimer won't have it, an' aunt says I shall be thirteen next birthday. No, I never gits no birthday presents, never gits anythink guv me 'cept now and then, but it ain't orfen, a copper in the street.

"When the big gals has got work as well as aunt, she locks the little uns up in the room, an' they've to look arter theirselves. Sometimes they sets theirselves alight but not orfen, for it aint much of a fire aunt leaves in. They can't tumble out o' the winder where we're

lodgin' now for the winder won't open, an' if they was to break the glass—some on it is broke a'ready—the panes is too small for them to squeegee through.

“Flowers I works mostly when they're in. Yes, flowers is nice to look at an' to smell, but that's for them as buys, not them as sells, to think about. I'd work anythink as I could git money to buy grub an' shoes an' clo'es, an' 'ud leave me stock-money to go on with.

“Sometimes I haven't got a shoe to my foot. I don't care much in summer, but it's orful cold in winter,—my toes gits swollen up like tatars wi' the chilblains. Any old think I'll buy second-hand to kiver me, but there's precious little warmth in some on 'em. It's grub, I thinks, as keeps you warmest, if you can git enough on it, — that, an' a drop o' hot cawfee or summut like that, now an' agin, to drink.

“Yes, I should like to larn cookin', if I was to be paid for 't, an' was to have good things to cook as I might take my share on,—but what's the good o' talkin' like that to a gal like me? I could bile a kittle if I'd got a bellers, or toast a red herrin'—that's about all the cookin' I could do. Orfen I on'y gits dry bread to eat.

“Sometimes I works water crease; that's shivery work in the cold weather, an' sometimes or'nges, or inguns, or nuts. Sometimes

it's pipe-lights an' sich like, but it's mostly flowers I sells when they're in.

"Common Garding I goes to. O' course I buys what's in, an' then splits up the bunches. Oh yes, I know the names o' flowers well enough, sich as I sells. There's roses, an' lilies o' the walley, an' wi'lets, an' wall-flowers, an' primroses, an' snowdrops, an' mignonette, an' cloves, an' camillers, when I can run to 'em, an' sich like ; an' then there's green lavender, an' dry lavender, too. I s'pose that's some kind of a flower, though 't is dry. I wish t' others would sell as well when they was withered. I've lost pretty nigh all my profit sometimes through their witherin', for all the waterin' I'd give 'em. Poor flowers, indeed ! It was me as was poor : flowers 'ain't got empty stomachs to fill. It's nonsense talkin' like that. No, I don't know that I like one flower better than another,—o' course I do, though ; I like them best as I can make most out on, an' that's as may happen. It's a penny I mostly sells at, 'cept the camillers.

"Oh, I don't stick to one place in 'tickler. Sometimes I stands by the Bank, an' sometimes I go about the City. 'Taint orfen the pollis interferes wi' me. They will sometimes, if they're shirty, becos there's a jam, an' the carmen an' that 'ont mind 'em. The pollis gets wery shirty if they ain't minded ; but if you calls 'em 'Sir,' an' move on when you're told, they ain't so bad, though it's cruel, it is, the

way they hunts about poor folks as on'y wants to 'arn a honest livin'. Why, vonce I see two bobbies take a man's barrer to the green-yard jest becos he did'nt move fast enough to please 'em, an' growled a bit: they'd been a black-guardin' of 'im. I call it stealin', I do, takin' poor folk's livin' out o' their mouths that fashion. Who's to know the slops did'nt noble the or'nges theirselves? It was or'nges the man had. At the bottom o' Wych Street, it was.

"Yes, sometimes I works the Strand, but I goes anywhere where I can sell best. If folks 'ont buy in one place I tries another. Where 'busses stops is ofren a good pitch, like as they do at the corner o' Tot'nam Court Road, 'cept that the chaps with papers sometimes shoves ye away. Yes, omblibus men sometimes buys. Some on 'em is wery smart, and likes to have a rose or a bunch o' wi'lets in their button-'oles. Oh, all sort o' folk buy o' me, when they *does* buy, 'cept 'tis poor folks' children. If they've got a penny o' course they'll spend it on grub or sweeties, instid o' flowers,—they'd be flats if they didn't. Little swell gals is fonder o' flowers than the boys. One day, when I was standin' by St. Martin's Church, a gen'leman as was goin' by wi' his little gals come back an' bought hevery bunch I'd got, 'cos the littlest had axed him for one.

"I go a goodish way sometimes, — yes, where there's flowers in the front gardings. There's pleny o' houses that ain't got none, s'

far 's I've seen, an' there ain't so many flowers where there *is* any that the folks they belongs to is in a 'urry to pick 'em; 'sides, there's the people in the streets to sell to.

"Sometimes of a Sunday I do tidyish. 'Tween the corner o' the 'ampstead Road an' Park Square I often work. There's a good lot o' men goes along there, when it's fine, an' they buys pretty free,—them as is dressed smart: how can I tell what they are? P'r'aps they're shopmen wantin' to be took for swells, but them as is dressed smart is the ones as buys. Them as has workyday clo'es on doesn't.

"Church! How could I go to church if I wanted to? Why, Sunday's my best day, when it don't rain. 'Sides they wouldn't let me come hinside a church in sich clo'es as I've got, an' if they would what 'ud be the good on it? They wouldn't let ye sell nuffink hinside a church I expec'. Oh, as to restin', if I'm tired o' standin' or walkin', I can squat down on a step, an' lose no time nayther, an' that's better than settin' still in a church doin' nuffink. Yes, I've 'eared chaps as they call preachers, shoutin' away in the streets, but I could never make 'ead or tail o' what they said. I expec' it's stuff as don't consarn me. No, aunt don't never go to church. She's got summut else to do, an so's most as is as poor as us. No, aunt don't drink, 'cept now an' ag'in a 'alf-a-pint o' beer when she can git it, an'

that ain't orfen; she's a honest hard-workin' woman as nobody can say a word ag'inst, that's what aunt is. No, I don't know as she never taught me anythink. Oh, anybody as isn't a flat can pick up marketin' for their-selves,—sich things as I sells. What you buys for a penny you must sell for tuppence, if ye can,—more if ye can; anyhow you must make a 'aypenny out on it.

“Yes, I've slep' in the parks afore now, Regency and St. Jeems's both. They may talk about closin' 'em, but it's heasy enough to git in. I likes the Regency best, it's heasier to git a place all to yerself there. Aunt says she'll welt me if I ever go wi' bad girls, an' most o' them as sleeps in the parks is that. O' course, if aunt welted me I could cut, but I should git no good out o' that. If I'm stumped now, aunt 'll lend me a brown or two when she's got 'em, but I don't know hanybody else as would,—leastways, without my payin' 'em a lot for 't. When I'm run out, an' aunt hain't got any money, ole Jummock 'ill lend me a sixpence,—vonce he lent me a bob,—but then he charges sich a lot, becos he says he hain't got no security. I 'ain't got nuffink to leave at the dolly-shop. Look at my shoes, ho' course they ain't a pair. They was makin' a road by the new Hislington Workus hup at 'Olloway, an' I picked 'em up out o' the rubbish as was shot.

“No, I ’opes when I grows up I shall be able to git ’old ’o summut as ’ll bring me in more than sellin’ flowers, though there’s women as do stick at it, hold as well as young. Well, if I was to git married I should ’ave to do something for my livin’. Poor men ain’t like swells; they can’t afford to let their wives set at ’ome with their ’ands in their aprons. ’Sides, I shouldn’t care to be a slug like that, and I’d rather be out in the streets sellin’ than slavin’ away indoors as some poor women does, an’ yet p’r’aps doesn’t make as much a day as me when luck’s good.

“There ain’t much, though, to be got out o’ flowers my way. Oh, yes, p’r’aps the profit’s pretty good, but then it comes to so little. What I should like if I’d got a man, ’ud be for us to ’ave a pony-cart an’ go about sellin’ roots an’ flowers in pots. We might do well, both on us workin’ em, one a-one side the street, an’ t’other t’other; ‘All a-blowin’, all a-growin’,’ you know. An’ then there’s changin’ ’em for old clo’es an’ boots an’ sich. Swoppin’s better than sellin’, I’ve heared, when you know the right way to go about it. Dessay I could soon larn, but it ’ud be a bother at fust. When you pays down money for a think you knows you mustn’t sell it wi’out gittin’ a good bit more for ’t; but in swoppin’ plants I should be took in at fust, if my ’usband wern’t fly. I shouldn’t understand the wally o’ clo’es, ye see, so them

as swopped 'em wi' me an' them I sold 'em to would both do me at fust goin' off.

"No, I can't read an' I can't write, but I can 'arn my own livin', an' that's what some as can read an' write, an' 's a good bit older than me, can't do."

VII.

DEATH IN THE DUST-YARD.

A LONDON dust-yard is, I think, the *ne plus ultra* of ugliness. It stands most likely in the midst of a dingy, miry chaos of straddling railway arches and coal sidings. The whitewash on the pens of neighbouring cattle stations only, by its contrast, makes the circumjacent dirt more noticeable. Very likely, too, there is a gloomy gas works near at hand, and a muddy canal, burdened with grimy, gritty, splashed, mal-odorous barges, creeping past the yard. When rain falls on its "soil," how different is the odour exhaled from that sent up from garden-mould beneath a summer shower! There is a huddle of black mounds, big and little, whose bulk tilted carts are increasing with shot loads, that send out clouds of blinding, stifling dust.

Besides the dust-heaps, sifted and unsifted,

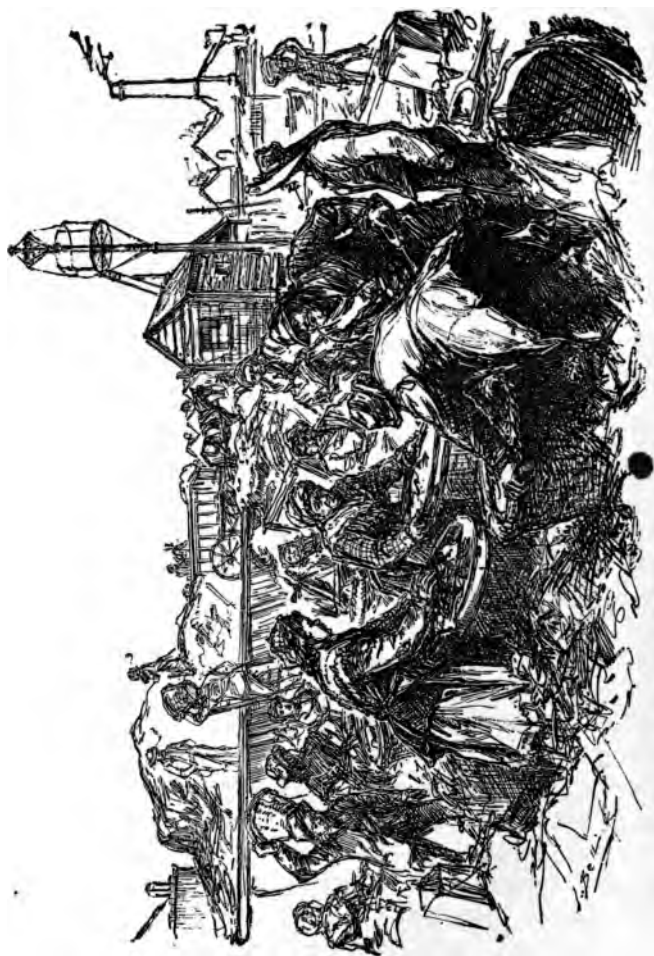
there are piles of old metal, old shoes, brick-bats, oyster shells, rags, bones and cinders. Think of pigs and poultry routing and pecking in the golden straw around a farm-house, and then look at the melancholy swine, the dismal ducks, and penitential hens which grub, with Lenten ashes not only on their heads but all over them, within the dust-yard. When the cocks try to crow, they seem, like the Ancient Mariner and his companions, to have been "choked with soot."

In such a dreary place of industry a row of dust-dredged, leather-aproned women were sifting as usual, with their little ones grubbing near them, very much like the pigs, only with perhaps a shade more cheerfulness,—since even in a dust-yard, thank heaven, a child can manage to be merry,—when one of the sifters suddenly exclaimed,

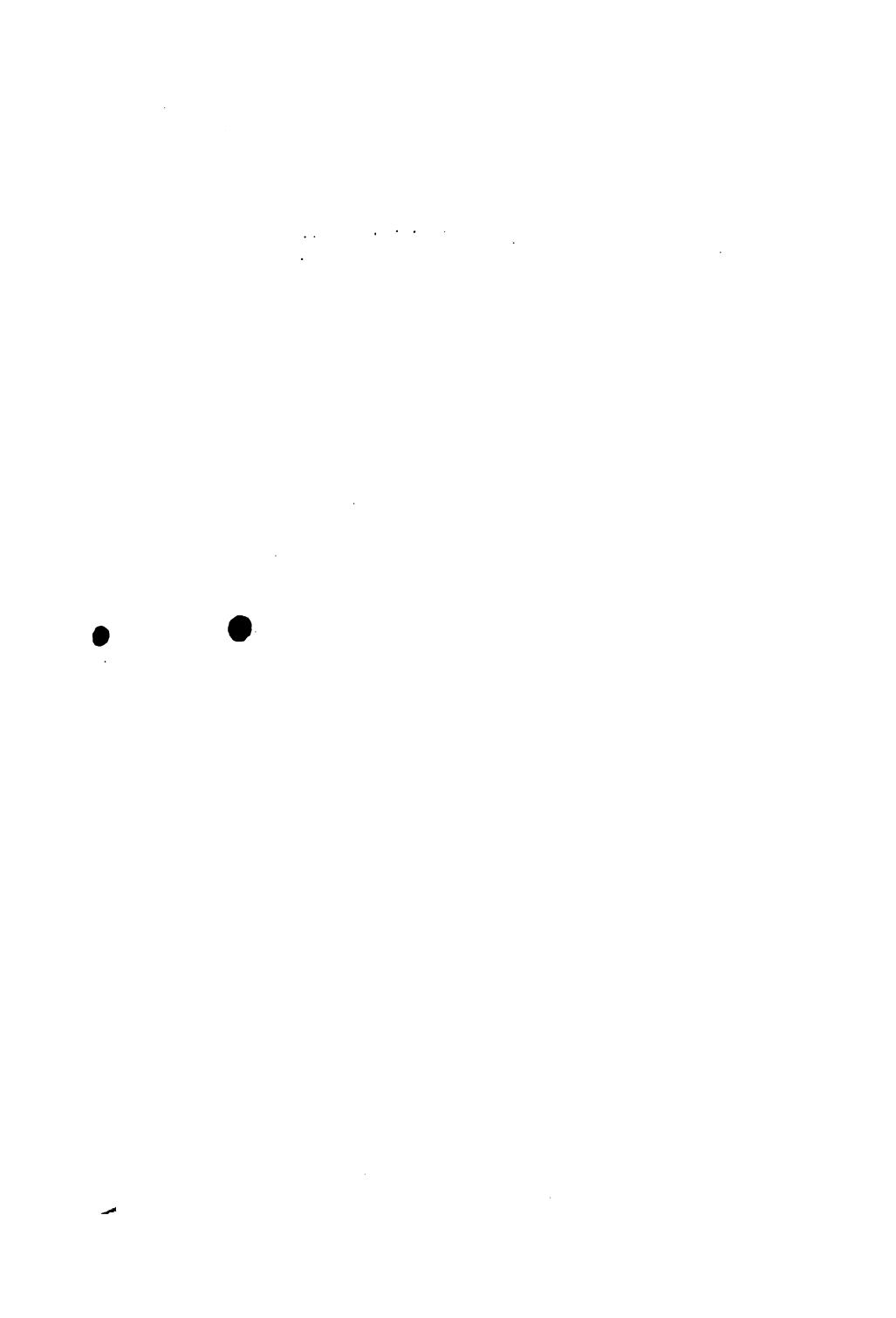
"It beats me, it do, however Jack come to take up wi' a weak young gal like she. She didn't ought to ha' come to the yard this mornin'. 'Old up, can't yer?"

The woman addressed the last words to a young fellow-worker, about to become a mother, who had fallen face foremost into the dust she had been sifting.

"'Old up, can't yer? My ole man would ha' licked me—an' sarve me jolly well right—if I'd been sich a chicken. You're a nice 'un for a smart chap like Jack to take up with!"



THE DUST-YARD.



Bet might have a rough tongue, but she had, after a fashion, a kind heart, and accordingly, when "Madam Sal" had come a little to herself, she helped her home. Bill, the man who was "feeding" the sieves, and the other sifters resumed their work as if nothing had happened; but as the sultry day wore on and Bet did not return, their curiosity was excited. One of the youngsters was despatched to Jack's house, or rather room, to learn what was "up," and brought back this news,—

"Sal's dead; an' there's two kids, a b'y an' a gal, an' Bet's a-nussin' on 'em."

The extemporized nurse was partly actuated by a genuine feeling of motherly and sisterly pity. She called to mind the babies she had lost, and was sorry for the wailing little twins upon her lap. She felt sorry, too, for the young creature she had pulled off the dust-heap. The grime had been washed off "Madam Sal's" comely face—still comely, although wasted—but Bet no longer felt envious of its good looks.

(The "Madam" had been added to Sal's name by her comrades, partly in envious satire, partly in reluctant compliment; she was not only far handsomer than they, but also morally superior. She did not get drunk, swear, or fight; she had insisted on having "marriage lines," and had always been true to her Jack; and she had some dim notion of a God and a hereafter.)

The corpse had been streeked as decently as circumstances would permit. With the moty afternoon sunlight pouring in upon the washed face, it lay at rest in the dusty, crowded little room—no yard but the grave-yard now for it to go to. Bet and her gossips, out of respect to the dead, talked as if they had all got very bad colds ; but neither their hoarse whispers nor the unchecked laughter and wrangling going on as usual outside the chamber of death, were anything to the young mother who could not hear the cries of her two poor helpless little babes. She was at peace, having done her duty in her poor little sphere, to the best of her little light.

Jack, in his heavy way, had been very fond of her, and she had made him a little better man than he would have been without her. She was a good neighbour, too ; willing to the best of her little power to do a kindness to anyone ; no wrangler, but a peace-maker.

When Bet thought of these things she was sorry for poor Sal, and yet she was not very sorry that Sal was gone.

Bet's first " ole man " being dead, she wished for another. She was not over particular,—anyone would be better than none, but still she had her preferences. There are differences even in dustmen, alike as they may seem to the superficial observer, and Jack was the one whom Bet would have taken, as the racing prophets

say, "for choice." She did not make believe that she was disinterested in taking the care of his children upon herself. Such little attempts at self-deception are made by widowers' female friends of a higher social grade than Bet's.

If Bet *had* attempted so to deceive herself, she would not have been allowed.

"It's hearily days, Bet, to be wantin' to step into the poor gal's shoes," was the Parthian arrow of one crabbed old crone, as she took her departure.

It was fortunate that she had not made the remark before she had got to the door, or Bet, whose temper was none of the mildest, might have been suddenly cured of her bad cold. As it was, her hands twitched at the twins, as if, in default of a flat-iron, she would have liked to fling one of them at the old woman's head.

When the news, as above reported, reached the dust-heap on which the dead woman had fallen, Bet's behaviour obtained no more charitable criticism from her fellow-labourers of her own sex. Bill, however, objected that a fine woman like Bet need not fling herself at Jack's head, he being "no sich mighty ketch."

"You dusn't say so to his face, no, nor to Bet's nayther, Bill," one of the women retorted.

"Well, I knows *this*," said Bill, beating a double retreat, "as there won't be no more siftin' done to-day. It's a-going to rain cats an' dogs, an' I'm off home."

He had barely time to tighten the outside garters of twine, with which his corduroy trousers were begirt, and to cowl himself with an old sack, before the black cloud overhead broke. Down came a torrent of rain, rattling on the barge tarpaulins, plumping like big bullets into the canal, raising from the dust-heaps that hideous stench to which I have referred, making everyone moistly miserable,—except the ducks, which partly recovered from their chronic depression and made feeble attempts to quack.

As Bill splashed his way through inky puddles out of the yard, Jack's cart splashed into it: Jack, half-muddled with the beer on which he had spent his copper *douceurs*, and in a very bad temper.

Amenities of intercourse are not cultivated in dust-yards. "Your Sal's kicked the bucket, Jack," shouted Bill.

With a superfluity of parts of speech,—especially of verbs and adjectives—Jack accused Bill of saying the thing that was not, and seizing his shovel flung it at Bill's head.

Jack, as I have said, was fond of his wife, and that was his way of showing it.

Bill ducked: the shovel whizzed over his head, and buried itself up to the handle in a dust-heap.

"Tworn't my fault, you fool," Bill growled back.

In his way Bill was sorry for his yard-mate,—"sympathized with him in his bereavement"—would be the polite phrase,—and, therefore, in spite of the provocation he had received, Bill used mild language.

When poor Jack got home, and learned that Bill had, figuratively, told the truth, he was for a short time mad with grief, and endured anguish very much like that of a bereaved bear. Civilized widowers use refined phrases, and smother their emotions in perfumed pocket-handkerchiefs. Jack's phrases were the reverse of refined, and he did not possess a pocket-handkerchief of any sort.

"Rampagin' like a wild beast," as his neighbours phrased it, he bundled the hoarsely whispering gossips out of his room. Even Bet had to flee before him, taking the twins with her.

"Yes, he've comed in," said the crabbed old crone to his cart-mate, who came later on to inquire after him. "Can't yer 'ear 'im a-roarin' like a bull?"

Jack's mate was sympathetic, but he was also practical. He went into Jack's room, and when he found him with his grimy face buried in his grimy hands, on the corpse's coverlet, shaking all over as he bellowed forth his sorrow, he patted him on the shoulder.

"Coom, Jack," he said, in a tone of friendly superiority; "what's the good o' that It

'ont wake her, poor gal, an' you're only a messin' of the sheet. Grievin's dry work,—don't ye find it so? Coom along, man: I'll stand a pot willin,'—'alf a gallon, I will."

So Jack and his mate went out to the "Seven Bells," a house of call for dustmen and barge-men. Jack was easily persuaded to drink. He swallowed a good pint of porter at starting, as with one deep sigh; but at first he considered it due to the memory of his deceased wife to abstain from smoke. However, the bargees and the dusties, male and female, came dropping in. The room soon was full: the foaming pots went round, the fair sex (if such a phrase may be applied to dustwomen) taking care to have their full share of the heavy wet.

Under its influence Jack's heavy heart began to lighten. He fingered a pipe, and then he surreptitiously charged it. After having plugged the shag with his little finger for an unusually long time, he began to toy with a spill, and at last stood boldly up and lighted it at the gas-burner.

"That's right, mate," cried his friend. "You'll do now, Jack! Beer's good (*puff*) an' baccy's good (*puff*) but there's nuffink like both on 'em (*puff, puff, puff*) together (*puff*), old chap (*puff*), ven a cove's (*puff*) in the doldrums" (*puff, puff, puff*).

As the smoke went up in widening rings,

Jack began to feel that, after all, his wife's death had not robbed life of all its joys.

More beer was drunk and songs were sung, of the kind in which both words and air are *ad libitum*, the only thing imperative being a thundering chorus. The force of habit ever and anon made Jack's lips frame themselves for the *ri-tol-de-rol-de-lido*, but after having so recently roared like a bull over poor Sal's corpse, he could not quite bring himself to join in these jovial roarings. Ere long, however, he waved irregular time with his pipe and hammered applause with his pewter.

Seeing him in this half-comforted state of mind, Bill, beery himself, unfortunately came up to make friends.

"I don't bear no malice, Jack," he said, holding out his hand, which Jack took—and began to cry. "It's a ill wind," Bill went on, with sententious gravity, "that don't blow nobbudy no good: that's vhat I ollus says. Vhat I mean, an' vich I means to say, Jack, as nobbudy can deny. Shake 'ands agin, old feller: yer needn't look so black. Who's afraid? I don't bear no malice. Glad to see yer. Your gal wouldn't ha' let ye come: now yer can. Yer ain't tied to yer old 'ooman's apron-strings, are ye, Jack? She's gone, pore gal! We must all on us die some time or t'other: so vhat's the odds vhen yer dies, says I,—that's vhat I says, Jack. She's gone,

pore gal: she was a nice gal, a wery nice gal!”

Bill's maunderings were suddenly cut short. Jack sprang up in a fury, and felled him with his quart pot like an ox.

Instantly the room was in a tumult. Everybody was talking at once, and hitting out at somebody,—it didn't much matter whom. The women joined in the fray—amongst them Bet, who had left the twins in the charge of some other nurse. Seeing Jack beset, she rushed to the rescue, and received two black eyes from a bargeman, which she repaid in kind.

To put an end to the free fight the publican turned off the gas; but when the combatants had tumbled out into the road, hostilities were renewed. The police, taught wisdom by experience, allowed the fire to burn itself out. It was still sputtering in the small hours, but at last expired.

Everybody got to bed somehow, and next morning nobody bore any malice, Bill not excepted.

Nobody, indeed, could definitely remember how it came to pass that there were so many black eyes to be seen, so far as grime would permit, at the dust-yard next day.

That was the mourning which was put on for poor Sal.

VIII.

PETER, THE FISHERMAN.

“BLESS yer ’eart, sir, I don’t call myself a poor man now. I’m goin’ ahead like the Flyin’ Scotchman, that’s what I am. I mean to keep a banker afore I die. Any’ow, I’ll ’ave a bird-shop, please the pigs. Precious ’ard up I’ve *been* in my time—’ad to buckle in my belt, as they say, when the chimes began to play, for I couldn’t git no dinner; an’ now, just you look at my room—ain’t it fit for a gen’leman to live in? No, no, I hain’t got a missis — if I had, it wouldn’t be so tidy. My fish is my family.”

So spoke a cheery-looking, bright-eyed, brown-skinned fellow, lightly attired in checked shirt, moleskin trousers, and “stocking-feet” (to borrow a Scotch phrase), who lolled in an old rocking chair, with his legs on the table, and a pipe in his mouth, in the little chamber which he praised.

It was a “first-floor back,” in one of the dreariest parts of the great parish of St. Pancras. It looked out on a chaos of squat, grimy houses, and cramped back-yards, tall chimney-stacks, black gasometers—full or half sunk in their tanks—railway arches and metals crossing and converging, and a muddy canal almost blocked

up by the big, clumsy, dirty, untidy barges, which lay alongside wharfs heaped with bricks, drain-pipes, lime, and dust. Its immediate outlook, however, was on a beautiful little oasis in that hideous desert. The tenant of the little room had turned the flat roof of the projecting kitchen or wash-house beneath into a little garden. In one corner he had piled up slag into a rockery, and planted it with ferns; mignonette, balsams, a bushy, small-blossomed old-fashioned fuchsia, Tom Thumb geraniums, London-pride, and wall-flowers, all thrrove more or less on the flat roof. A potted arum curved its graceful stalk, and lighted, so to speak, the flowers beneath with its ivory spathe and golden spadix; and in the middle of the garden stood a washing-tub, with canary-plant twined about it, and gold and silver fish, the man's trade stock, noiselessly gliding round and round within. Inside the room were more flowers—a creeping-jenny trained on a fan-frame, and musk-plants cascading in green and gold over pots slung from the ceiling. The furniture had evidently been picked up second-hand, a chair and so on at a time; but, although worn, it had a "natty" look. On the top of the turn-up bedstead, which, when turned up, made a very fair substitute for a chiffonier, stood a canaries' breeding-cage. Outside on the window-ledge a lark fluttered its wings over a shamrocked sod in its bow-windowed home,

and on one of the walls hung a framed, coloured engraving (given at Christmas by one of the illustrated papers) of a mottled melon, green and purple grapes—all kinds of blociny fruit, a massive chased goblet, wine blushing richly in the bulb of a slim-necked flask, and a tropical bird—I forget whether a parrot or macaw—of gorgeous plumage. My luxuriously lolling gentleman in the shirt-sleeves — Peter the Fisherman was the name he went by—had evidently an eye that revelled in colour.

“I’d allus a likin’ for nice-lookin’ thinx an’ natur’,” he remarked in the course of conversation — “flowers an’ birds an’ sich. Flowers don’t eat nuffink, but birds would come expensive, on’y, yer see, I do a little in the dealin’ line with them as well as the fishes. I allus like to ’ave a bird for my own like, though I’m allus a-changin’. Some I sells, an’ some I swops, and then, yer see, when I work the country, I’m bound to git rid on them, becos I couldn’t trust no one to look arter ’em while I was away. No, my rent ain’t runnin’ on for nuffink then. I can allus git summun glad enough to take my room, and it ain’t everybody I’d let ’ave it. I’ve made it snug, and I want to keep it snug till I git my bird-shop I’ve set my mind on. But then, yer see, I couldn’t trust strangers like to look arter the birds. ’Tisn’t as if they belonged to ’em. The flowers is different. If it don’t rain, ’tain’t

much trouble to give 'em a jug o' water now and again.

"I was allus fond o' fishin'. 'Ampstead ponds and 'Ighgate ponds, and the New River, and the Lea, I used to go fishin' in when I was on'y a bit of a boy. I've been so tired I could 'ardly drag my legs along comin' back. Up the river I go mostly now, when I've a chance. Last winter I caught a whoppin' barbel—ketched 'old on its tail, an' lugged it out with my 'and, I did—it was that numb with cold. Folks don't make much count of 'em to eat, but they ain't bad if you bile 'em with a bit o' bacon. I know when I should ha' been glad enough to git as good a dinner without the bacon.

"My gold-fish, in course, I buys. Well, I *have* bought 'em at a pinch in the Dials, but it wouldn't pay if I was allus to buy 'em there. There's the second profit, you understand. Mostly I buys 'em of the 'olesale men. Pretty nigh all we sell is English fish. They breed 'em in the country in warm water. Yes, I've heared that gold-fish come from Chaney. There's only one pond where they'll breed there, I've heared tell. They've bred pretty free helsewheres. Some comes in ships now, but not nigh so many as the English fish. The little uns is pretty nigh black, an' then they turn gold and silver. Sovs and Bobs I calls 'em. Yes, I've heared that they're a sort o'

carp like, and them stories about carp livin' so long that they got blue-moulded. P'raps it's true, p'raps it ain't—who's to say? Any'ow, gold-fish don't live for 'underds o' years—lucky for us they don't; and I know I shouldn't like to git old like that. What's the good o' yer life when you're past enj'yin' of it? About the blue mould and that, *it* don't come from age. You'll see warts like on gold-fish sometimes. No, it don't cost me wery much in the way o' feed. The little uns can pretty well shift for theirselves, but the big uns wants bread-crumbs.

“Talkin' about carp, do you see that scar in my finger, sir—there, that white pucker like, inside? When I was a boy, father got a job down at Colchester, and we went to live there for a bit. I'd been bathin' in the river at a place they call the Sheafen Farm, and was a-lyin' on the bank dryin' of myself, when up swam a whoppin' carp. Precious sharp-set he must ha' been. I pulled out my boot-lace, and tied a crooked pin on, and stuck a bit o' bread on it, and let it down afore his wery nose, and blest if he didn't gobble it, and I lugged him out. And so when I got 'ome I must clean my fish myself, and cut myself. Mother put some salt in, and stopped the bleedin' arter a bit, but jest didn't it smart!

“Poor old mother! Now as I'm gittin' on, an' could make her comfor'ble, I wish I'd got

'er to live along o' me. She were a good mother to me, and it do seem 'ard that she should ha' 'ad all the downs, and none o' the hups. I'm not a marryin' man—I never cared pertikler for any 'ooman 'cept mother—I never 'ad ne'er a sister; but I should like to see old mother a-settin' waitin' for me when I comes 'ome. I should enj'y my life twice as much. It's lonesome like, 'avin' on'y yer hown self to fend for. Poor old mother! When father died—he'd 'ad a drop too much, poor chap, and slipped as he was a-comin' back'ards down a ladder—the 'od as he was a-carryin' tripped him some'ow, an' down he come upon 'is 'ead—that was the hend o' my old dad. He wasn't sich a bad chap when he were sober, but when he'd got the beer aboard, he'd beat poor mother awful. Well, when he died, poor mother was left with a lot o' us boys. Some was big enough to ha' 'elped 'er, but they didn't. They went off on their own 'ook, an' left 'er and us little uns to git on jest any'ow. She was allus at work, or a-tryin' arter it. She'd never been a big 'ooman, but littler an' littler she got, till she looked as if she'd blow away if she didn't put a brick in her pocket for ballast. I can't downright say she died o' starvation, for she'd 'ad a bit o' bread to eat the day she died, but that's pretty nigh what it come to—'unger, an' cold, an' 'ard work, an' no work. It was a bitter day, the day she died. I borrowed

an old broom, an' went out to sweep doorways.

“‘Tom,’ she says—for Peter’s on’y a name folks ’as give me some’ow—‘Tom,’ she says, as I was a-goin’ out—‘Tom,’ she says, ‘give me a kiss.’

“An’ she kissed me jest as she used to when I was a little kid. We ’adn’t kissed one another afore for I don’t know ’ow long. Bless yer ’eart, sir, when poor folks is a-starvin’, they hain’t no time for kissin’—that’s on’y put down in the poetry-books.

“‘You’ve been a good boy, Tom,’ she says.

“It was a long time afore I could git a job that day, for the snow kep’ coming down, an’ folks wouldn’t ’ave their doorways done jest to be as bad as ever next minute. But at last I got three jobs all alongside o’ each other, and as soon as I’d got the money I ran back wi’ it to mother. We’d have a better feed than ordinary, I thought, if we ’ad to go without next day. But when I got back, she was sittin’ stooped over the fireplace—there worn’t no fire in it, or her clothes would ha’ been alight. It was gittin’ darkish, an’ I felt skeared—she sot so still.

“‘Mother,’ I says, but she never took no notice, and when I ketched ’old on ’er, she was cold an’ dead as could be. That was ’ow poor mother come by ’er death. She’s buried in old St. Pancridge Churchyard. Leastways, she was,

but when the new railroad come along, she an' a lot more poor folk was dug up and carted away somewhere. I'm uncommon glad she kissed me afore she died, an' said I'd been good to 'er—though I don't rightly know 'ow, 'cept that I 'adn't been quite as owdacious as some o' the t'others.

“Poor old mother!—but frettin' won't do 'er no good, an' wherever she be, she 'oodn't want to keep me from enj'yin' of my life, poor dear, jest 'cos 'ers were a 'ard un. I'd allus a likin' for enj'yin' of myself. What else is your life guv ye for, if all thinx was ordered as they ought to?

“It's queer, but my luck turned a'mos' d'reckly arter mother died. I fell in with a very decent chap in the Brill—a coster, as took me about wi' him, an' I stayed along o' him till I could start for myself. He worked gold-fish sometimes, and I'd the lookin' arter 'em, an' that's what put it into my 'ead—let alone my bein' allus fond o' sich thinx—to work 'em myself when I started on my own 'ook. I goes about wi' a barrer in winter, but the fish an' the bird-fancyin's what I like, an' I hain't done bad at it. I should go in for pigeons if I'd the 'commodation for 'em 'ere; an' now an' then I pick up a tidy dawg, but I hain't 'commodation for them neither. I like to keep my place clean, an' that yer can't do if you've dawgs, an' no run for 'em. Hows'ever,

I 'ope to 'ave my little shop afore long, an' then if yer want anythink in my line, sir, I'll sarve ye as reas'nable as you'd git 'em anywheres. If it's fish yer want, I've some real 'ansome fellers in my tub there—the Round Pond in St. Pancridge's Park, I calls it.

“Who's my customers? Well, I do tidyish all round about London—where there's willars with little tables in the front winders; a glass globe with silver an' gold-fish in it makes a pretty horniment for a parler winder. Yes, I sells globes as well as fish. In course, I can't cart a lot about wi' me, but I git 'em for them as wants 'em. Some queer customers I come acrost at times. One day I was in the 'Ackney Road, when it was a deal more respectabler than it is now, an' gen'lemen as went to banks an' the like o' that every mornin' in the 'buses, lived in them two-an'-two 'ouses wi' back gardings and a little bit in front, that's let off in rooms now, or else there's shops built out in front. Well, I was a-goin' along with a globe-ful, and a little boy and gal that was goin' in at the gate o' one o' them 'ouses wanted their mar to buy 'em a couple apiece, but she said as they'd die, an' she couldn't afford it; an' I couldn't prewail upon 'er, though the little uns was so disapp'inted they looked fit to cry. Well, I'd jest got beyond Cambridge 'Eath Gate—there *was* a pike there then—when up there come peltin' arter me a sea-farin' lookin' gent—

a jolly chap, that looked as if he'd jest come ashore, in his best togs, to enj'y 'isself.

“ ‘Ah, you're the man,’ he says, and blest if he didn't buy the 'ole bilin' on 'em, glass and all. ‘They're for my nevv'y an' niece,’ he says, an' into a cab he whipped wi' 'em.

“ He might ha' saved the toll, for there was a hempty cab standin' jest on the t'other side o' the gate, but, bless yer 'eart, he didn't stop to think o' that.

“ ‘Go ahead, cabby,’ he sings out, when they were through the gate, an' off they went, with the water an' the fish bobbin' out hover his blue trousis, an' him pickin' the fish out o' the stror by the tails, an' larfin' fit to crack his sides.

“ I met the cab comin' back, an' the cabman a-grinnin'. He chucks up 'is 'and to show me what the sailor gent 'ad give 'im for that bit of a ride.

“ ‘He's a good sort,’ says he.

“ ‘An' a good customer,’ says I; ‘I wish I'd got some more to sell 'im.’

“ When I went by the 'ouse, there was the fish on the little table in the front winder, an' the little gal hup in her uncle's arms, a-kissin' on 'im as if he'd been sugar-candy. No, he worn't a mite the wuss for liquor. He was jolly to git ashore, an' 'e'd done a kind haction, an' so he was enj'yin' of 'isself. That's 'ow folks allus talk. They're so grumpy mostly

theirselves that when they see a cove enj'yin' o' 'isself, they say he's been drinking.

"I go country rounds as well, an' that's what I like best. The fish go off freer, an' I like walkin' in the country—when it don't rain; an' if it do, you can git under a tree. I like 'earin' the rain comin' down on a tree like a big humbereller. An' everythink smells so sweet in the country, an' there's the birds a-singin', an' the rabbits poppin' out afore yer wery feet, an' the cows, an' the country people. They're jest like the cows, they look so jolly sleepy—they're never in a drive like London folks. An' then there's the flowers—why, bless yer 'eart, there's gardings where they grub up them beautiful white conwolvuluses, as if they was weeds. All over the 'edges they grows.

"Yes, there's queer customers in the country, too. There's one old gent I sarve out Ongar way. A lot I sells 'im every year, but there's none left next. It's my belief he eats 'em. Any'ow, he axed me once if they was best b'iled or br'iled. That's *his* way o' enj'yin' 'isself, I reckon. Seems queer, don't it, sir, when he could buy salmon every day it's in season? But 'everybody to 'is likin's' my motter."

IX.

"PARSON," THE CROSSING-SWEEPER.

IF anyone wants to realize, as the phrase goes, the little army of crossing-sweepers we have in London, let him take a walk—say for a mile or two—on a muddy day, and give a penny to every one who touches hat, makes a bob, as if shutting up like a spy-glass, or trots after him, trailing broom in one hand, and tugging at tangled forelock with the other. I remember when it would have cost anyone, disposed to give in this way, between a shilling and eighteen-pence to walk from the Archway Tavern, Highgate Hill, to Highbury Cock and back. For anyone of a squeezable temperament, therefore, it was decidedly cheaper to take the 'bus.

It is simply as a statistical experiment, just for once in a way, that I recommend this penny-giving. It would be a great misfortune if all crossing-sweepers had pennies given them indiscriminately. I would not make a clean sweep of the sweepers, but I should like to see their ranks thinned considerably—viz., by the elimination of the adults who are able, and the young who might be trained to do something better than what, in the most favourable instances, is little better than a make-believe of work, as a pretext for begging, either directly or by suggestion.

Still, there are people for whom crossing-sweeping seems to have been provided as an occupation by "pre-established harmony"—cripples, and old men and women, shrivelled like dry wrinkled apples, who are just strong enough to give the public that real convenience, a clean crossing, and who at the same time, tottering and shivering day after day at the same post, have a chance of attracting substantial sympathy from which they would be shut out if they burrowed all day in the holes to which they retire at night to hide. It seems to me that alms-giving, regular or occasional, to these poor people, can scarcely be called demoralising. They shrink from the degradation as well as the dreary confinement of the workhouse—try to fancy, at any rate, that they are working for their living. After all, the chance coppers and the little allowances they receive do not come to much. In bygone days, one or two crossing-sweepers may perhaps have died in possession of considerable sums. I am inclined to believe, however, that even in these cases the amount has been exaggerated. Mnemonical is very different from optical perspective. Things of the past loom larger than they were. At any rate, crossing-sweepers of the present day leave no wills. If they did, the amounts under which the personalty would have to be sworn would be comico-pathetic.

"Parson"—so called from the long, shabby,

loose, once-black frock-coat he wore, so long that the tails, which mischievous street-boys were very fond of pulling on the sly, swept the ground like a lady's train—was a short, squat old man, with a wooden leg. His hair was the colour of an unwashed frosted carrot—the little of it that could be seen peeping from the dust-man's fantail, reaching almost to his waist, with which he nearly extinguished his monkey-like face. At least, it was monkey-like in its wrinkles and its fun, but there was not a trace of monkey-malice in it. A more civil obliging little fellow than Parson there could not be. He would hop off on little errands for people from whom he expected, and got, no fee. The impish street-boys were the only persons who seemed able to sour greatly Parson's milk of human kindness. The police and the omnibus-men, the newsvendors and the miscellaneous loungers hanging about the inn in front of which Parson's crossing, or rather crossings, stretched, did their best to protect the old fellow, and soundly cuffed his persecutors when they chanced to run their way; but, nevertheless, he was shamefully tormented.

"Little pot, soon hot," says the proverb. That was not the case with Parson; but even he could not always keep his wrath from boiling over, and when wrought up to that pitch of exasperation, he would proceed to



THE CROSSING-SWEEPER.

take the law into his own hands. Brandishing his broom like a broadsword, he made fierce dot-and-go-one charges on the foe. Sometimes the poor little fellow tripped, and when he had picked himself up out of the mud, was obliged to slink back discomfited to his crossing before a hostile chorus of derisive laughter. At other times, perhaps, he succeeded in mowing down a straggler in the rear of the retreating enemy. Generally, however, they escaped scot-free. Occasionally, when the old man saw that they were getting beyond his reach, he would hurl his broom after them like a javelin; a young varlet would snatch it up, and then poor Parson had to begin another weary dot-and-go-one chase.

On a foggy night, the old man was run over, breaking three or four of his ribs. Whilst he was laid up, I heard him relate his history.

"I'm a native of Whitechapel," he said; "Goodman's Fields is where I was born an' bred—sich breedin' as I hever 'ad, an' that worn't much. Peter's my name. I s'pose I must 'ave another somewheres, but that's the on'y name I hever went by, 'cept Parson, which them howdacious boys calls me. No, I can't say whether it's surname or chris'n name. Bless your 'cart, I was never chris'ned. Father an' mother couldn't spare time for thinx like that. Father's name worn't Peter. I'd a uncle

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lived at Barking, an' they called him Peter. In the barge line or fishin' line, he were—I can't rec'llect which on 'em it was. Mother made hout as he was a-goin' to do summut for me, on'y he didn't—'cept give me a clout on the 'ead one day. That was the on'y time I hever see him, an' that's all I hever got from Uncle Peter. An' 'tworn't much I hever got from anybody helse. Father worked at the docks, when he could git work, an' worn't too drunk to do it, an' that worn't allus.

“It's 'ard work, ye see, for a woman to keep on lovin' a man when he can't give her a gownd to her back, an' blackens 'er heyes as orfen as he gits drunk. Father was a decentish sort o' man when he worn't on the drink, but anythink he'd do—beg, borrer, or steal—to git 'old o' drink, an when it were hinside on 'im he were jest a brute; an' mother worn't much better. There were two young uns—and that was two too many—me an' Poll. I was very fond o' Poll, and so she were o' me though you mightn't think it to look at me. I never were a beauty; I s'pose it was becos we used both on us to git drubbed. Many an' many's the time we haint 'ad a bit to heat all day, 'cept it was some rubbage we'd picked up in the mar-kit. Sometimes a-Sundays, when it was cold, we went to church—Whitechapel Church—in the evenink, jest to git a warm. Leastways, that's what I went for, but Poll was diff'rent

from me. She liked to 'ear what the parson said. No, the parson never took no notice on us. P'raps he would if he'd a-seen us, but he didn't. They say he was good to poor folks.

"'Tworn't orfen we went. The people looked as if we 'adn't any right to. Pull in their clothes, they would, as if we'd give 'em ty'pus fever. That ain't pleasant. I ought to be pretty well used to it by this time, but I ain't. An' some o'them as gives theirselves sich hairs is no sich great shakes arter all. It's them as is the wust. I've been spoke to a deal kinder by them as was real gentlefolks than by them as wasn't much better than me, excep' they'd got better clothes; an' yet they've talked as if I was the dirt beneath their feet. A swell knows he's a swell, an' don't mind who he's seen a-talkin' to, but them stuck-up people don't know what they are. They want to be sum-mut, and can't. I s'pose they thinks, if they speaks civil to me, folks 'll think I'm their father; an' p'raps he worn't no better. But there, what's the good o' makin' a fuss about sich nonsense? What do it matter? It'll be all the same a 'underd 'ears to come.

"Mostly we went to the Lane a-Sundays, Poll an' me. The shops was all hopen, an' there's sich a crowd o' people. It was livelier than where the shops was shut, an' now an' ag'in we'd git a bit o' fried fish give us, or the

like o' that. The Jews 'as a name for bein' 'ard at a barg'in, but some on 'em is very good to poor folks, 'specially kids. They're oncommon fond o' their own, an' so I s'pose they don't like to see t'others a-starvin'. No, I never stole nuffink. I should, though, if it 'adn't a-been for Poll. When yer inside's as hempty as a drum, it's 'ard work to see thinx layin' houtside the shops as you could heat, or sell to git summut to heat, an' keep your 'ands off 'em. It's heasy for ye to git rid o' a'most anythink you like to steal—find's their word—down Whitechapel way. One day I'd cotched 'old of a bit o' bacon that was put out with a ticket on it at a shop in Whitechapel High Street, but Poll snatched it hout o' my 'ands an' put it back. There was a long feller with a apron down to his toes, watchin' an' shoutin' 'Buy, buy, buy!' houtside, but his back was turned. Jest then, though, he looked round. 'Lucky for you, you did,' says he to Poll; an' he shammed as if he was a-goin' to ketch us, an' off we went like a fire-engine. But it wasn't as she was afraid o' bein' nabbed that made 'er put it back. It's wonderful 'owever she picked it up, for she'd never been larnt nuffink good, 'cept the little bit she'd 'eared at church; but she'd a notion as she should like to do thinx on the square, so as she might git to 'eaven; an' she wanted to keep me straight, too, for says she, 'Peter,' she says, 'I should

like, if I was to git into the good place, an' they was to shut the door in yer face.'

"She's been there, if anybody is, many an' many a 'ear, pore gal. I was oncommon cut up when she died, but I'm glad now, for she was a pretty gal, an' a pretty face is a cuss to a pore gal like her. She'd ha' been sure to come to grief, though she was so good. It was becos she 'adn't enough to heat—that's 'ow pore little Poll come to die. The parish buried 'er, in course—there worn't no velvet pall an' feathers. She was put into the coffin, an' a chap carried 'er under 'is harm jest as if she was a parcel. She worn't much to carry, for she were pretty nigh next to nuffink but skin an' bone.

"They weren't long a-buryin' of 'er, but what do it matter? She didn't git to 'eaven none the slower. I'm sometimes afeared I shan't never git there, but I'm suttin sure Poll's there, jest as safe as if she was Miss Coutts, an' she's a good lady, she is. But I didn't think about 'er bein' in 'eaven when I see 'em a-buryin' of 'er. When they shovelled in the hearth, I wished it was a-top o' me as well as 'er. I 'adn't a soul left in the world as cared for me, an' I haint 'ad since—not like Poll.

"I dunno what become o' father an' mother. Poll an' me was left to shift for ourselves. All sort o' thinx I've been. Anythink as turned

up I'd do—anyways try at—'cos if I didn't, yer see, I must ha' starved. Beggars can't be choosers. 'That's the wust o' bein' poor. You can't git the right vally o' yer work when you hain't nuffink to fall back on. Folks takes advantage on yer. 'Take it or leave it,' they says, free an' easy, when all the time they are glad to git 'old on yer, an' ud give ye yer own axin's, if yer could on'y 'old hout—but they know yer can't, ye see. I never did nuffink as was downright bad so as I could be pulled up for 't, but some o' the thinx I've been forced to do was uncommon shady. Poll wouldn't ha' liked it if she'd seen me at 'em. It was thinkin' o' 'er kep' me from wuss. Yes, an' keeps me now, p'r'aps, It's queer the way I can't forgit 'er—'cos I'd never no one else to care for me, I guess. I can see her as plain now as I could sixty 'ear an' more ago—it's hall that since she died. She don't never seem to ha' growed, or altered one bit.

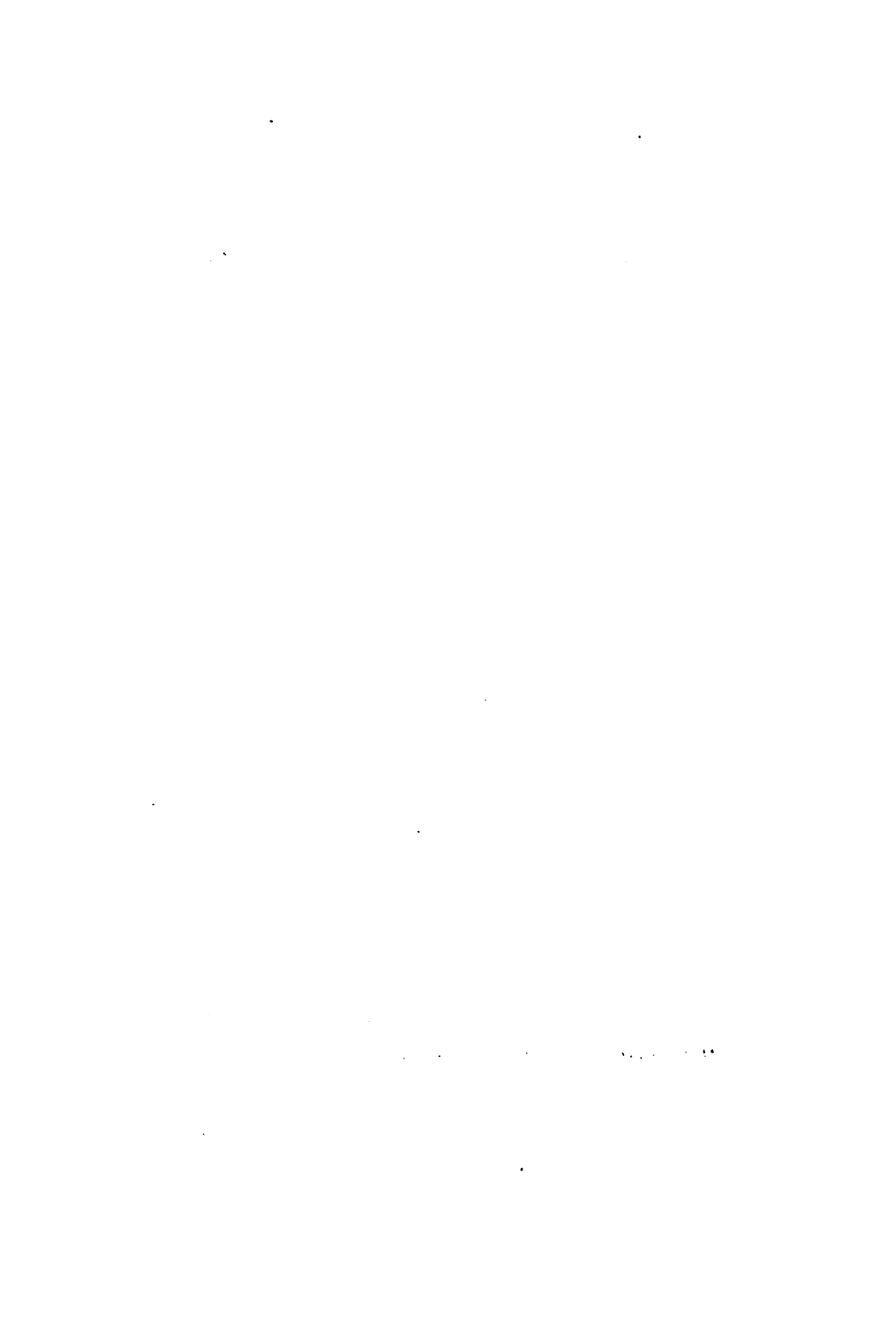
"She was a bit proud of 'er curly 'air, an' kep' it clean an' tidy, though 'twas hard work, for sometimes we'd nuffink better than cinders to go to bed on. There's a field they used to shoot rubbish in out by Bow—leastways, it ain't a field now, but covered with 'ouses as thick as they can stand. Poll an' me used to go there with the other folk to see what we could pick up, an' sometimes we slept there. We'd scoop out a 'ole, so that the wind couldn't git at us,

an' pick the softest place to put our 'eads on, an' kiver ourselves hup wi' any old rotten bit o' sacking, an' sich like, we could find, and sleep like tops we would. We looked like chimbley-sweeps when we woke in the mornin', but Poll allus went down to the ditch an' give 'erself a wash, an' combed 'er 'air hout, if she'd on'y got 'er fingers to do it with. An uncommon pretty gal she was, though she were 'alf starved, an' dressed pretty nigh like a scarecrow. If she'd been figged hout an' dressed proper, there aint a gal I hever see as could 'old a candle to 'er—not a patch on 'er back they wouldn't be. I should like to see 'er jist as she used to was for once in a way, but if hever I git along wi' 'er ag'in, I shouldn't like 'er to keep like that. If she was a child, she wouldn't be able to git on as we used wi' an' old chap like me.

"My luck seems to be gittin' runned hover—that's 'ow I lost my leg. I was a-'elpin' a drover in the Mile End Road. I'd gone out lookin' arter sumfink to do as fur as Romford, an' he picked me up at the markit there, an' give me a job to 'elp drive some ship to the Cattle Markit—it was in Smiffle then. Well, I'd run on to 'ead 'em back from the Cambridge 'Eath Road, when up come some fellers in a cart, 'alf sprung. The 'oss was goin' as fast as hever it could, but the chap as was drivin' kep' on leatherin' it wi' the hend o' the reins—he 'adn't got no whip. So I shouted to 'em

not to run over the ship, an' flung up my harms—but they never took no 'eed. On they come, an' down I went, an' the cart went hover me, an' scrunched my leg like a snail. They carried me to the Lon'on 'Orspital, an' arter a bit, the doctors cut off my leg—they said they couldn't mend it—an' I've been a hippety-hop hever since. I shall be glad, though, when I'm peggin' away on my timber-toe ag'in, for it's lonesome layin' on yer back wi' nuffink to do.

“Sundays is my best days. People ain't in sich a 'urry to git to church as they are to git to their business, an' then they're kinder a-Sundays. There's a sweet-lookin' lady goes hover my crossin', as true as the clock, hevery Sunday, with 'er three little gals, as like their mar as little peas is to a big 'un. They takes it in turns to give me my penny, an' they speaks so pretty to me. I reg'lar look hout for seein' of 'em. Real gentlefolks they are, I'll go bail, though they ain't dressed nigh so smart as a good many as goes by an' never gives me nuffink.”





THE NIGHT COFFEE-STALL.

X.

AT A COFFEE-STALL.

ON a foggy or a frosty night a London coffee-stall is a pleasant thing for the eye to fall upon. It looks like a little bit of Home come out of doors to comfort the cheerless and the cold. Perhaps it may be somewhat tantalizing to those who cannot purchase of its wares, but even they can linger in its warmth; and those who are hurrying or drifting through the blinded, shuttered streets in the small hours, not caring to eat or drink, get a notion of company from the coffee-stall as they go by, which they do not find in the solitary, suspicious policeman, flashing his bull's-eye into dark entries, trying windows and rattling door-handles, or in the long lines of dimly-gleaming lamps, and abbreviated ranks of the night cabs. Most canvas tenements have an unpleasantly temporary look about them, — are disagreeably suggestive of vagrancy. The gipsy, the Arab, the soldier, the gold-digger, all strike their tents, and wander on—who knows whither? The covered coffee-stall, on the contrary, has, as I have said, a look of home. We know that although its glow may vanish in the garish light of day, it will re-appear next night in the same place, like a night-blowing cereus to shed

its perfume. Brightly gleam or cosily twinkle the lamps of the coffee-stall. The round eyes of its cans have no angry heat, but warm welcome in their red glow, which surrounds them with a ring of light, pleasantly reflected in broken radiations from their polished silver-like tin, their burnished gold-like brass. How fragrant is the aroma of the coffee, although it may not have come from Mocha. Tea and cocoa may also be obtained at the coffee-stall, but the beverage from which it derives its name is the specialty which deservedly gives it its fame.

Let those who will talk of chicory,—to many palates a pleasant, and by them demanded adulteration,—and of chicory itself adulterated with turnips, carrots, and Venetian-red,—of horse-beans, burnt crusts, and so on and so on: those who have drunk coffee-stall coffee when cold and weary, or simply feverishly thirsty, will declare that it has a flavour peculiarly its own,—and not mean this altogether as a left-handed compliment. It warms the cockles of the heart, and makes the footsore one inclined to leap like the kids of the dervish who was—well, perhaps, not *its* discoverer.

What a dairy-like whiteness—at any rate by night—the earthenware of the coffee-stall displays. How, I might go on to say, how richly oleaginous is its cake, how piquantly salt its bread and butter, how delicately cut its sand-

wiches, how full-flavoured its eggs, however fresh its watercress,—were it not for a fear that I might be supposed to have some covert meaning of satire; whereas I sincerely wish to glorify the hot, brown, cheering beverage, and warm, redly-golden, cosy look of a night coffee-stall.

All coffee-stalls have more or less of this cosy look, but I am referring particularly to the night stalls more or less screened from the wandering night wind.

I have in my mind's eye one, tented with tarpaulin and presided over by a bronzed motherly-faced woman in a man's great-coat, at which I had a cup some years ago. I had taken it into my head to walk from Greenwich to London by night. The public-houses were closed, and so Deptford Broadway was almost empty and quiet. Here and there gas or a candle still burned in an upper window, but for the most part the walls were blank. The dingy buildings in dark Mill Lane were more thickly blotched with bilious light,—a drunken wrangle going on inside one of its low lodging-houses profaned the stillness of the night, which has a sanctity about it even in the vilest neighbourhoods,—and a little knot of the lane's unsavoury denizens lounged at its malodorous mouth. Both the railway stations at New Cross were closed; the semaphores drooped their arms as if weary with a long day's work, and the lamps looking down on the far-stretch-

ing lines of untraversed rails seemed to blink sulkily, as if angry at being compelled still to keep awake for nothing.

The New Cross gates (there was a turnpike then) stretched, white in the lamplight, across the Queen's and Old Kent Roads; the toll-house—the body between those out-spread wings—was so sound asleep that it seemed strange it had not tucked its chimney under one of them. Beside the palings of Hatcham Park lurked a rough, but as he saw a policeman on the other side of the way made manifest by the gaslight gleaming on his metal hat-crown (this walk was taken in the days, or rather nights, before our constables were helmeted like ancient Romans), the rough preserved a statuesque quiescence.

The dim roadside villas and dull roadside terraces no other thing expressed than long disquiet merged in rest. Where a doctor's red lamp broke the uniformity of the shadowy lines of brick and mortar, it had no expectation in it of possible pulls at the night bell, but seemed to be as firmly convinced that its master would be allowed to snore out the night undisturbed as if it had been put up expressly as a danger-signal to warn patients off. The Surrey Canal may call itself Grand, but that night it looked very much like a torpid slug. A little way beyond the canal bridge I overtook a very early market waggon grinding up to

town with a high-piled load of cabbages, its drowsy driver, perched upon the shaft, nodding as if bent on immolating himself, like a Juggernaut victim, beneath the near fore-wheel, and the old-fashioned lanterns that had lighted the wain through country lanes still dangling, with unextinguished candles, from its rimy tarpaulin.

A little farther on I came upon two constables conducting an "overtaken" brother of the force to the station-house, or peradventure to private repose. "A fellow-feeling makes one wondrous kind:" there was no need to entreat them to

"Take *him* up tenderly,
Lift him with care."

As I passed St. George's Church a number of church clocks were striking the hour, one after another, as if actuated by only an approximate consensus of opinion. Last of all St. Paul's boomed out the time in tones that said, "Now it *is* two o'clock." In that small hour "ayont the twal," I stopped to take my cup of coffee at the stall of which I have spoken. Homely though it was, it was prominently picturesque in itself and vaguely picturesque in its surroundings.

Not far off, lighted windows in two great hospitals told of wakeful sickness and watching care. Hard by, a minster-like church indistinctly raised its pinnacled tower. On both

sides rose many-floored warehouses, solider blocks of blackness in the general gloom. At the foot of the granite steps lapped the dimly dark, secret-holding river, flecked with trembling and broken lines of light from ship and shore. Over the great bridge, so thronged by day, dribbled in thin intermittent threads the tide of traffic which never entirely ceases there, from year's end to year's end.

Inside the coffee-stall screen, on the pavement, lay what I thought at first was a bundle of mildewed rags. I was wondering why the stall-keeper should choose such an unappetizing settee, as I supposed the bundle to be, when I found that it was a girl curled up very much like a cat. The lamp shone down full upon her face, but she slept on as if she meant never to wake again.

"I do believe," the stall-keeper explained, "the poor gal wouldn't ha' lived till mornin' if I hadn't a-given her a cup o' cawfee and sumthink to eat with it,—like a wild beast she eat. And then she begged so hard I'd let her come inside and lay down, that I couldn't say her nay, though it's a hill-convenience; and what good will it be to her, when I've got to go away and leave her a-layin' there? She don't look as if she'd wake afore: in her grave she couldn't sleep no sounder."

It was temporary heaven, rather, that the wretched girl had found. Friendless, famished,

fagged out, frozen, homeless, she had met with one who had given her food, drink, and rest in shelter from the cold. No wonder she slept soundly. It was hard to refrain from wishing that she might never wake again, but cease to live, as she lay on the earth that had been so cruel a step-mother to her, with a heart softened by the first act of kindness she had received, no doubt, for many a day.

The two or three homeless people who were outside worshippers of the stall's fires were tattered and torn, but their dress was whole and clean in comparison with this poor girl's. I can only liken it, so far as colour and cleanliness are concerned, to the heaps of mud we see scraped up by the roadside: it was as full of holes as a net, but many of its meshes were loose strips of ravelled stuff. One foot, shod with dirt as with a sandal-sole, peeped from beneath her dress, and most likely the other had not shoe or stocking either. She had on some kind of little shawl, or rather neckerchief, originally, perhaps, like those worn by milk-women, in which she hunched up her shoulders and folded her hands; but she did not seem to have any under-clothing,—at least what looked like dirty flesh showed here and there as faintly lighter streaks and blotches through the gashes in her gown. Perhaps, however, the most pitiable part of her attire was her bonnet. It had been of the tawdry "fine" kind, and the

wire stalks and a few of the flabby, washed-out, and then dirt-engrained calico petals of its artificial flowers were entangled in her touzled hair. Whether her face had ever been pretty I cannot say, it was so disguised in dirt and disfigured by disease. I could not have guessed her age within four or five years, but the stall-keeper declared that she could not be sixteen.

It was easy enough, however, to guess her history. Perhaps she was left an orphan, and had taken to the gutter as naturally as a duckling takes to the pond ; perhaps she was sent into the streets by her parents to beg or steal, under pretence of selling ; perhaps, unable any longer to endure the barbarous tyranny of some Mrs. Brownrigg, she rushed into the streets from a slavey's life. At any rate she found her way into a low lodging-house, where all the little modesty she had left was laughed out of her, and she was ruined whilst yet a mere child. Thenceforth her life became a round of theft, precocious gin-drinking, frequent hunger, and the most squalid form of vice, the beggarly wages of which the lad who claimed her, like a Kafir, as his slave to work for him, appropriated, and to escape from the loathsome consequences of which she would commit some desperate act, and rejoice to find herself in prison. This is plain speech, but it is necessary to speak plainly when the life of the poor wretch I saw lying under the coffee-stall tarpaulin is typical

of the lot of scores,—perhaps I should be nearer the truth if I said hundreds,—of young girls in London.

Shortly after I stopped at the coffee-stall another man stopped there, whose arrival almost made me start. “Here, also, hast thou found me: have I found thee, my inscrutable?” I said within myself.

This was a man whom by some strange chance I had come across frequently in all kinds of places,—north, south, east, and west. In the same day I have met him in West Strand and Hackney Wick, in the Caledonian Road and by the Elephant and Castle, and in more sundered places. After our meeting at the coffee-stall I often met him in this puzzling way. I have not seen him for two or three years, and I miss him. Of course there is nothing wonderful in a man’s being in very different parts of London on the same day, but there is something strange in another man, time after time, encountering him in them. A superstitious feeling sometimes came over me when I once more met this mysterious stranger.

“Have I ever, perhaps in some previous state of being,” I have been half-inclined to ask myself, “murdered anybody, and is this his avenging wraith pursuing me?”

“Can I,” at other times I have thought, “in any other way have unconsciously rendered myself criminally amenable to the laws of my

country? Am I a false coiner or something of that kind, without knowing it, and is this a detective dogging my steps?"

He was a tall man, with broad, high shoulders curving inwards with a stoop,—a man of large frame but scarcely any flesh. His head was disproportionately small, the skin of his face drawn tightly over his rather prominent cheekbones and small eagle's-beak-like nose. His eyes, too, were as those of an eagle,—an eagle tamed, instead of being rendered savage by hunger; but there was a touching kind of simple amiability playing about the almost childlike little mouth which contrasted so strangely with his gaunt pinched cheeks. He always wore the same threadbare black suit, the frock-coat buttoned well up to the chin, as if to hide the lack, or the lack of cleanliness, of linen. The nearest guess I could make at his character had been that he was a political refugee. I was not, therefore, surprised when he raised his limp-brimmed hat, and said in a slightly foreign accent, "If you please, coffee, madame."

He drank off his hot mugful at a draught, handed back his mug with a "Tank you, madame," once more raised his hat, and recommenced his Wandering Jew, Ancient Mariner-like roamings, Boroughwards.

"He's been by here afore like that," said the stall-keeper. "He's some kind o' furriner,

wery down on his luck, I should say, pore gen'leman. Why pore furriners should swarm over to Lon'on as they do fair beats me. Hain't we got pore enough of our own?"

Just as I was about to leave the stall a brawny Briton, sulky from the effects of over-night beer, roughly thrust aside the stall's hangers-on, and gave orders with a liberality towards himself which must have made those he had shouldered away feel doubly miserable. He was clad in bone-buttoned corduroy, and had a warm comforter round his neck. I suppose he was some market underling. He growled, with his mouth full, at his hard fate in being compelled to get up so early.

I crossed the bridge and struck through the City, sealed and silent as a sepulchre,—the fabulously wealthy City, left to the charge of a few policemen, private watchmen, and more jovial, sailor-like, cheerily "Good *night*, sir! Good *morning*, you mean," answering firemen.

As I listened to the clocks chiming the quarters, the old churches seemed to be talking amongst themselves, now that they had a chance in the hush of hearing one another's voices, over the strange disparities of fortune that are huddled together in the densely populated province of brick and mortar, stone and stucco, in the core of which they are planted.

XI.

SUNDAY MORNING IN PETTICOAT LANE.

IN the core of the City, on a Sunday morning, there are streets as silent as sepulchres. When you disturb their hush with your echoing foot-fall, you do not see another human being, except, perhaps, some weary watchman or housekeeper looking down with lack-lustre eyes on the bare pavement of the deserted close-shuttered thoroughfares, or into a dis-used churchless churchyard, walled in, like the bottom of a well, with towering warehouses.

It is startling to cross from that drowsy calm into the brawling bustle of the Aldgate and Whitechapel Jews' quarter.

In and about Houndsditch shops are open and watchmakers at work, heedless of the chaff upon their screwed-up eyes shouted in at them by filthy young roughs hanging before their windows. Every now and then some one passes with a garment or hat in his hand, or a clothes-bag on his back. Phil's Buildings and Cutler Street are choked with buyers and sellers of old clothes—male and female, pouring in and out of the old-clothes exchanges like very dirty bees at the entrances of very dingy hives. The atmosphere of those densely thronged marts does not remind one of "spicy breezes

blowing soft from Ceylon's isle"—it is redolent of oleaginous malodours, of a general dusty musty, fustiness. And yet what energetic bargaining is going on over the old garments! Though some of them look fit for little else than scarecrows, how voices are raised to sea-bird screeches, what elegancies of very composite English—Cockneyese *plus* Irish brogue, Jewish enunciation, and a splutter of foreign gutturals—are exchanged, how arms are pump-handled and fists are clenched, in the transfer of these fallen leaves of use and fashion. Some of the chafferers look very much as if they were going to fight. Hard by in their Meeting House the Friends are sitting, silent as sleek uncooing doves. London is rich in contrasts. By the bye, do Quaker hats, coats, and breeches ever find their way into Rag Fair? And if so, who buys them to wear again?

On the other side of Houndsditch street-sellers are coming with their baskets and their barrows from the fruit market in Duke's Place and Mitre Street. The busiest of the marketing is over; in front of one of the unglazed stores stands a chaise with a white pony, which gleams like moonlight, and a scarlet-lined rug which glows like fire, from their contrast to the dinginess of the sloppy rubbish-littered square, on which the gloomy, grimy Synagogue frowns down. The chaise is waiting, I suppose, to carry the storekeeper, with his portly gold-

chained mother in Israel and black-eyed little children of Israel into the country, but most of his fellow-tradesmen and their wives linger in somewhat slovenly undress, as if they expected to do a good bit of business yet in their papered pale-golden lemons, their brown walnuts, and Brazil nuts, their shaggy-haired cocoa-nuts, and rocky lumps of conglomerated dates. Some flashily dressed young fellows stand talking before the Jew public-houses. Their talk is of business—no mere time, and therefore money-wasting chaff. Indeed everybody in this part of the world seems to want to make a deal of some kind. “Vat do you think of it, Mosshy?” shouts a woman to her husband, who is leaning with his back against the wall on the other side of the street. Mrs. Mosshy has been redeeming a spare five minutes in bargaining for something she had not the slightest intention of buying before the would-be vendor chanced to pass her way, and wishes for the marital approval of her proposed investment.

But Petticoat Lane on Sunday morning will give the most vivid idea of the greed of gain, or the hard struggle to make a living, there is in the neighbourhood I am writing about.

Petticoat Lane on Sunday morning is a very striking but by no means beautiful sight. It is not the place an Englishman proud of his country would take a foreigner to see, unless



PETTICOAT LANE.

he were simply proud of his countrymen's business energy. Cramped Middlesex Street is then crammed with, for the most part, a very frowsy throng. When two persons with clean faces and in moderately decent clothes meet there, they give one another an astonished stare. The one or two burly policemen who stand at corners—black breakwaters in the struggling tides that flow from Whitechapel to Bishopsgate Street, and *vice versa*—look sulky when a “respectably” dressed person passes them.

“What on earth brings you here, to increase our bother?” they seem to say. “Perhaps you'll get into a scrimmage, and then what can we do for you, or you do for yourself?”

On the whole, however, the Sunday crowds sidle, with their arms down, through the Lane without breach of the peace, and with a general display of rough good-nature; though now and then a sturdy, stubbly-chinned denizen of the locality scowls on the “respectable” intruder in it as if he would like to pitch into him for his impertinence. Stunted squalor, however, rather than sturdiness, is the general characteristic of those with whom you most literally rub shoulders in Petticoat Lane. Those who object to contact with the Great Unwashed should give it a wide berth; otherwise they will feel inclined, like Mr. Pendennis in his dandy days, to take a perfumed bath. Little

children, however, manage to get through the crowd without being crunched like snails. Of course horseplay goes on. A favourite joke, when a jam occurs, is to seize one of the street-sellers' barrows which still further block the very narrow street, and drive it like a ploughshare with a wild "Hi! Hi! Hi!" through the obstructing crowd. When these crushes take place, the explorer of the Lane must not be astonished if he should be canoned through the open doorway or window of a shop, or find a sticky seat on a confectionery barrow. The way in which both street-sellers and shopkeepers expose their goods in a place in which, if an organised dash were made at them, it seems as if it would be impossible for the owners to preserve them from plunder or wanton mischief, is one of the curiosities of London life.

The barrows are freighted with the usual eatables and drinkables, flimsy toys and flimsier gimcracks of East End *al fresco* trade. The specialties of the Oriental-looking open-fronted shops are fried fish, greasy-looking tarts and cakes, little tubs of cucumbers pickled in piccalilli mixture, second-hand tools, and all kinds of second-hand integuments for man, woman, and child. There are swaying *lianas* of hats and caps, ranks of "restored" boots, piles of gaily-coloured handkerchiefs—some, perchance, in Pistol's sense, "conveyed"—and groves of dusky garments in which, here

and there, a footman's old livery, a soldier's stained coat, or a faded silk or satin gown shines faintly like a dust-dimmed king-parrot, ibis, or macaw.

Rusty, dusty, cobwebby old metal lies upon the ground, looking more likely to secure an archæologist as a purchaser than any one in want of something to be turned to daily use; and, indeed, some of the boots and shoes, in spite of all the care their cobblers have bestowed upon them, seem about as wearable as lumps of coal. *Per contra* there are some very gay heaps of women's boots, and one tray full of tiny bright-coloured babies' shoes that have a strangely *innocent* look in this den of dirt and greed. A hulking bricklayer's-labourer halts before the tray. His cap, his hair, his flannel jacket, his corduroy trousers gartered with twine, are all so powdered with dust that a cloud of it flies out, as from a beaten mat, when he jostles against any one; his beery face is as roughly red as one of his own bricks; he has a stubbly chin, and a black, or rather a dull green, red, and lead-coloured eye; and he carries under one arm a vicious bull-terrier, dropping blood from recent bites on muzzle, paw, and ear. The bricklayer's-labourer is not a captivating being, but I have hopes of him when he stops and buys a doll's-like pair of steel-starred blue morocco shoes for his "little un at whoam."

Salesmen shout at the top of their voices,

“Buy, buy, buy;” “What gentleman ’ll stand treat next?” &c., &c. Those who come to buy, and those who only come to look, keep themselves warm, and “enjoy company,” or to wile away the time until the public-houses open, are almost all making a noise of some kind or other. And so, in two conflicting turbulent tides, little dreamt of by many a neighbouring church and chapel goer, the motley, tobacco-scented crowd forces its way up and down.

How sweet the Sabbath *thus* to spend!

XII.

AN ITALIAN GIRL'S STORY.*

AH, yes, ven I go out rond—outside de street vere de stone is—I see flower on de fruit tree, but it is cold, ver cold, in your contree. De vind jomp up and bite me on de neck like big dog. I cannot use myself to your contree. I shiver now as in de vinter. It is quite so cold.

De sun make himself feel in my contree, not run away and hide himself four, five, eight veek, like dis contree, and den ven he com, no good—not moosh. You mus put yourself into

* Now-a-days a good many organ girls are English women dressed up.

de fire and choke yourself vid black smoke to make yourself varm.

Dey say your contree ver reech, but not fine contree like Eetalee. De big grape and de orange and de lemon and de melon grow dere onder de sky, and de bulls is twice so big as Anglish. Tree year, more, I am in dis contree, but I veesh me back vid my poor moder. My moder dead dere—bury. Nobody care for me like moder—no, not no one—never. Poor fader dead now, in dis contree—all alone. I do not find it ver reech; no, not for me!

Ven moder die, fader go vander like de ship. No, no, not on de sea!—de ship vid four leg and de vool. Vander dis vay, and dat vay, all vay. After tree, four veek, he com back and sell our ting. No, no, ve ave not moosh for him to sell. Den he tell me ve go France; and ve go France. Ve go Civita Vecchia and take de vaisseau. Yes, yes, vot your call your-ship dis time, not de ship vid de horn and de hoof—to Marseilles. Plenty ship dere. Den ve valk to Lyons, vere dey make de silk, and den to Paris. Ve rest good vile at Paris. Plenty Italien at Paris. Fader get an organ and go out to play, and I go vid him. I dance and beat de tambour, and take him rond for de moanee. Sometime plendy of moanee, sometime not noding. A camarade of my fader say he go Lon-don, and my fader say ve go Lon-don also. Dis man know Lon-don vell.

So ve valk to Boulogne, and dere ve take de steamboat to Lon-don Breege.

I am seek all de time on de vaisseau—ah, how I am seek!—and de vater com over de ship and vet me ver bad. De lamp shine on de river ven ve get to Lon-don Breege. Quite dark and de street full of mud. I not know veech vay Carlo lead us; but yes, I know now ver vell. Ve go onder de church, up Feesh Street Hill, an' so ve go tro de Ceetee to Hol-born, up Ledger Lane to Eyre Street. Nearly all Italien dere—men and boy, old vomen and de leetell babee de moder take out vid her on de organ like de monkey. It vas good to hear my language. Ah! if you could speak my language you could better onderstand. I cannot tell you in de English. It is ver strange language, I know but leetell. Vy you call so many ting bloody? De turnip, and de herring, and de pint of heer, and de pair of boot, and de poll-eeseman—everything!

De camarade of my fader bad man. He try to lead me leave my fader and get moanee for him vid my dance and de tambour. He say fader poor fool—know noting of dis contree; dat I shall starve if I stay vid him. But I will not leave my fader. I tell him vat Carlo say—I tell all de Italien in de house—and dey drive Carlo out to go lodge vere he can.

All de oder Italien ver kind at first—not all alvay, but at first. Dey tell us veech vay to

go to find moanee. Soon ve find for ourselve. Den dey not so kind. Dey say ve go about too moosh; dat ve should make de good rond for ourselve, not com spoil deir rond. All vay ve go. Vat good stay here ven ve get no moanee? So ve go try dere—all tro Lon-don. Sometime ve valk tro de field, den ve sleep at de town in de field; but ven ve at Lon-don ve try to sleep at de same house, de first house ve com to ven ve ave daysambark. Full of Italien—all rond full of Italien—but ve ave use ourselve more to dat house. Ah, yes; ve ave our macaroni dere, but not alvay. Sometime ve take bread and tea and potato and de herring as de oder, but ve ave de macaroni also, and ve make our soup.

Ve go to de same place ven ve can, because we feel not so daysolated in your contree if ve can call von place our house.

Ah, yes; I am all alone now—all alone. Often I feel myself ver daysolated. A poor voman die in our house all alone. I am glad I keep avake to see her die. She pray me keep avake to see her die. She com to de house vid her leetell daughter; nobody know her; nobody know vy she com. She not speak moosh, but veep ver moosh in de night ven she tink de oder all asleep. Yes, she vas Italien like de oder, but she scarce ever speak.

Only two, tree day after she com, de leetell girl fall seek. First her moder say she ave got

de cold, but it is de fever she ave got. She soon die, poor leetell girl, and ven de moder com back from de burying, she ave de fever also. She pray me stay vid her; so I ask my fader, and he not refuse me. He go out by himself and leave me vid de poor voman at de house. De doctor com too late. He shake his head and go away. Dat night she die. She ave been mad, but she vake up before she die, ver frightened till she see me. Den she squeeze my hand and try to tank me, but she die, and de church clock strike Von. Nobody know noting about her.

Ah, yes, dere is som Anglish dat is kind to de Italien, but not ver many—no, no, not many. Dey vill give de pennee or de aypennee because deir leetell boy and girl love de museek and de dance, but dey do not love us—no, no more dan de monkey. De monkey dance, and sometime he turn de handell, and dey laugh, but dey do not love de monkey—no, no—and dey do not love neider de Italien. If deir temper bad, dey tell him go away, and call for de poll-eeseman lock him up. De Italien alway go away, if any von malade, but de Anglish often tell de poll-eeseman big lie, dat he may drive away de Italien. No, no, I ave not find your reech contree ver reech contree for me.

Ah, but yes, som of de Anglish is ver kind to de Italien—two, tree. In de first vinter ve spend in Angland, ve go von day to vat you

call Clapton. It vas ver cold day. Fader ad his hand blue vid de cold ; he could not feel de handell. It vas impossible dat I should not shake de tambour, because I vas shaking alway myself. For two, tree hour ve ave not take von aypennee, ven, behold, I see de face of young peopell laughing above de vindow-blind. I go into de court and dance, and de young peopell laugh all de more—yes, ver moosh.

De signor and de signora com to de vindow to see vat make so moosh of laugh, and de signor put his hand into his pocket, but den he say someting to de signora, and she laugh and nod her head. Den he speak to his leetell boy, and de leetell boy run out and tell me to go into de house, and den he run out into de road and bring in fader. Dey lead us into de kitchen vere is de big fire, and dey make us seat ourselve, and cat de hot food and drink de hot drink ; and ven ve are rested ve are told dat ve may go, and de leetell boy and his broder and his seester give us moanee—each of dem von pennee.

Each time ve go by after dat, de leetell boy and his broder and his seester give us deir moanee ven dey are at home. Ve do not go all de veeks—dat not polite. But von day ven ve go, all de vindow is blinded. It is ver hot, for dis contree—de sun shine full on dem. But my fader set himself to play upon de organ, and I take myself to de fore court and

commence to dance. It is more pleasant dere, for de tall tree trow down deir shade, and de lilac flower smell ver sweet. But a servant com out and tell me go away and stop de museek, for her master dead—de kind gentellman—and to be bury nex day, and her mistress not suffer de sound of de organ. Nex time ve go by, dere is great bill in de vindow, and de signora and de leetell boy and his broder and his seester all gone away, and ve never see dem—no, not never no more.

Ah, yes, it is so. Ve see moosh of change in de house ve play to. De peopell com and de peopell go as de fly. Now dey are here and now dey are dere, or dey are gone away, nobody know vere. Tree year—more—I am in London, and I ave seen great change—yes, ver moosh. Dere is von house at Eyegate vere de blackbird make deir nest in de vater-pipe. Every year I see de blackbird, but de peopell!—two, tree new each year. Som time old gentellman vid de vite air, som time de big man vid de face like beef, dat growl at us like de bull; som time de vidow lady, dat dress herself ver smart to get a new usband. Ah, yes, it is so—ver moosh of change. Ve tink to see de young gentellman and lady—no good, no, not moosh, play vere no young gentellman and lady. But dere com a leetell man vid de long air, and put de finger in de ear, and stamp and try to bite. It is no good to smile at de leetell man—dat

make him vorse. He svear at us—yes, ver bad vord for gentellman ; and if ve no go, he go for de poll-eeseman, and de leetell man tell de judge he cannot write his book, he cannot count up de von and de two, because ve make so moosh of museek. Den de judge tell us ve mus not make museek vere de leetell man can ear ; if he no write his book, count up de von and de two, his vife and his infant vill ave no beef. But ve not ave no bread if ve not make de museek. Vat ve do ? De leetell man say he ear our museek in de oder street, vere ve not make none—no, not at all.

To Greenveech ve go som time at de fête—to de Black Heath, vere dey ride de donkey and de leetell horse, and de young vomen jomp over de long line, and de young men hunt de young vomen in and out for to kees. Ah, yes, and de old men and de old vomen run down de hill in de park for to get de red face, and ave no bret ; som time dey roll down. It is ver droll to see de fat old man go down like de cask. But de park is ver nice ven de moanee ave come, to rest on de grass onder de tree, and give de leetell de cr morsel of bread, and look at de peopell and de ship on de vater. I take rond de tambour, and de pennee dance ven he jomp into him. Som time I dance, but not alway—dere is not space. But von time ve are not glad at Greenveech. De peopell ave dronk too moosh of beer. Dey knock down my poor

fader, and take away my moanee. Vat shall ve do? My poor fader cry, for de organ is spoil. And vere ve sleep? Ve ave no moanee. De rain com down. Ve are ver sad. But den com four, five gentellmen dat ave see all. Dey call de dronk peopell de coward, but dey are ver kind to us. Dey give moanee to mend de organ, and for de steamboat. Ah, yes, som English ver good, but not all—no, no, not all—not at all. Dere lodge in our house a leetell boy dat ave vite mice and de hurdy-gurdy. Von night he com back and say dat de bad English boy ave keel his mice. Poor leetell boy, he cry moosh. And de veeked breekmaker pelt Giuseppe and his monkey vid mud and old brek. Dey say Giuseppe also monkey. Ah, yes, som English ver bad to poor Italien. Dey des-pise us—as de black beetell. No von care moosh for de Italien but de priest and de good seester. Ah, yes, but a Protestant signora vonce ver good. I vas ver tire. I seat myself outside a church, and de young lady com out. She can speak my language. It make my heart dance to ear her talk so vell. She pity me, and ask me dis and ask me dat—ask ull about myself. No von never before talk to me like dat. She talk to me like my moder, like my seester, dough she vas ver grand signora. My fader not vid me den, and she say Lon-don ver bad place, and I mus not go bout by myself—de veeked men and vomen vill steal

me for to do me arm. She talk like de good angel—like de clear vater in de contree running over de stone. She tell me vere she live, and bid me com see her, and I say "Yes." It make my heart glad to tink I see her again, and ear her talk. Ven my poor fader vas left me, I vas som time ver lonely in dis big, black, cold Lon-don. My poor fader alive den, but it vas ver sweet to my heart ven de kind Anglish lady talk dat vay. Den I say I com to her house nex day, and I run to my fader and tell him. I am tire no longer. But my fader say "No"—shake his ead ver moosh ven I say "Yes, yes, yes." He say de Anglish lady bad voman—vant to steal my soul—make me ereteek. I laugh and say "No, no, no," but my fader say "Yes, yes, yes." Again I say "No, no, no." I am ver angry for de dear Anglish lady. Den my fader turn ver sad, and say I vant to go away and be reech by myself, and leave him all alone. Dat make me weep, and I promise I vill not go see de Anglish lady. After my poor fader die I go, but de kind Anglish lady gone away, and dey tell me go away fast, fast.

Dis is ow my poor fader die. Som time ve go to de gentellmen dat paint de face and de rag. Dey are nice gentellmen—som. Dey make de joke and give us moanee to sit still and lift de arm dis vay, dat vay. Som time dey give us bread-an-chess and de pot-o'-beer, and drink out of him. Dey are ver foonee gentellmen.

Dey veer de velvet coat and de hat like de Italien dat play de organ, and ver long hair and beard and dey smoke de pipe ver moosh. Dey are nice gentellmen—ver foonee, ver polite. Not like de oder Anglish. Ah, but my poor fader seize de cold ven he com ome von night, ven de snow com down. He die—he kees me—he say “Ah, my poor girl,” and den he die. And now I am alone in Lon-don—all alone !

XIII.

A DOCK-LABOUREE'S WIFE.

A SAILOR's life is a hard one ; but it is not the hardest. After looking in upon the Jacks ashore, taking their plentiful, well-cooked mid-day meal in the light, clean, warm, comfortable dining-hall of the Home in Dock Street, go down to the bottom of the street, and see the poor, greasy, ragged, depressed creatures who hang, almost all day long, about the chief entrance of the London Docks, in lingering hope—often a vain hope, and often so long deferred that the heart grows sick—of getting work,—a casual job.

The men who man the craft inside are better off than those who load and unload them.

See them mustering in force in the raw mornings,—the residuum of many callings, and many nationalities,—clamorous for work as gulls or rooks for food; and oh, how far less clean and sleek! Watch them waiting within the yards for hours; call to mind that an eastwind throws thousands of these from-hand-to-mouth-living pariahs of industry instantly out of employment, and a dock-labourer's lot will not seem a very enviable one.

It is hard work they have to do when they do get employed; but so long as a man's strength is not over-taxed, or his life made a dreary burden to him—one long drudgery without a glimpse of pleasure or hope—the mere fact that a man is worked hard is no ground for lavishing pity upon him. It is to be feared that a spirit of laziness is spreading amongst our hand-workers, at least the best paid amongst them. Our ancestors of a generation or two back, who were at their business early and late, no doubt overdid the thing; but they would lift up their hands in very natural astonishment if they could come back and witness the short hours which many mechanics work now-a-days, the way in which they dawdle over their work when paid by time, and drop their tools as if made of hot iron at the first stroke of the knocking-off hour, and then hear of the wages they get for their leisurely performances.

It is not for the hardness of his work, nor even for the pooriness of his pay, that the dock-labourer is so much to be pitied, as for its precariousness. When remuneration is uncertain, providence is impossible. Those, and there are many such, who have been reduced to the necessity of working in the docks by bad habits, grow worse and worse; and those who have been beaten down by misfortune rather than their own fault have a hard fight to keep themselves from sinking to the level of their demoralized fellows,—a fight which very often is not successful.

“My husband was a dear fellow once,” said a poor woman whose history may be summed up as nearly as possible in her own words, without troubling the reader with the questions which drew forth parts of the information. “My husband was a dear fellow once: aye, and he’s a good fellow now at times, when he can keep off the accursed drink. His luck has beaten him down, poor chap, and now and again he’ll take a drop to keep his heart up a bit; and I’m sure I wouldn’t grudge it to him if it did him any good, but it don’t. It only makes him glummer, and then he goes on drinking, and gets savage, and says what he neither thinks nor means. He never laid a hand on me or the children: thank God, at his worst, he’s too fond of us for that. But the things he says at times is very bitter,—I don’t

know but what I'd rather he should beat me; for, spite of all that's come and gone,—and nobody can deny but I've had a deal to cross me,—I can't help loving of him true; and we might all of us live happy together yet, if he could but get a chance, poor fellow. But there you see, when he comes to himself and finds that he's drunk up all his money, he's so angry with himself and ashamed to look us in the face, that as soon as he has earned a bit more, he begins drinking to forget himself, and it's the old story over again.

“Other times he won't spend scarce a ha'-penny on himself, work all day long and not touch a drop of beer, or p'r'aps even a bite of food, so that he may have all the money to bring home to me. If he's got an old pipe half-full in his pocket, he'll just take a puff at dinner-time to dull his hunger, and then work on till he's ready to drop. And what's queer is that he's steadiest when his work's most regular. It's far oftener he breaks out when we've to look at every farthing, and often, too to look for farthings and not find 'em, than, when he's taking his money every day and it wouldn't matter quite so much if he did take an extra half-pint now and again: then as I'm telling you, he sometimes won't take scarce enough to keep body and soul together. I've seen him come in that dead beat that when I've cooked him a herring or two, or a bit of

meat if we could run to it, he's been so sick he couldn't eat it. But food doesn't long go begging in this house. We've none so much that we can afford to waste: if one don't want it there's plenty that do. It's cruel the little the children have to eat at times, and it cuts me when my poor Tom takes it into his head to starve himself, for he wants his food as much as most men, to keep his strength up. I wish he'd never take to the drink instead. He had plenty of spirit when he was a young man; he'd lift heavy weights and things like that, just to show he wouldn't be beat; but he was never what you may call strong, and it isn't child's play they give 'em to do at the docks. They've to strain away at winches till you'd think their loins would crack, and keep on walking up the inside of a wheel just as if they were on the treadmill, and lug about loaded trucks and iron rods, and great heavy pieces of timber. I'm pretty well past all that now, but I used to feel it, I did, that my husband should have to demean himself to work like that.

"We used to be respectable, both of us, though you mightn't think it. There isn't much to show for it. My poor children, some of them with not a shoe to their foot, and me with scarce a gown to my back,—me that my poor old father used to dress so smart. I wouldn't mind what I did for my children,—

no, nor to help my poor Tom neither; but I declare to you when I've had the chance of work I haven't been able to take it, because I'd nothing decent to go in. I'm ashamed to stand talking to any decent person in such an old rag as I've got on. And then, there's my poor children: as nice children as any lord's, if they were only properly fed, and washed and dressed. I haven't to pay anything for their schooling. That would have gone against my pride once, and now I don't like to send 'em with not a shoe to their foot, and scarce a rag to their back; and sometimes I want them to help me, and sometimes I think, 'What's the good of bothering them with lessons, filling their heads and leaving their backs bare and their bellies empty? It's coals, and clothes, and boots and stockings, and bread, and beef,—not books, they want, poor dears.'

"I was a farmer's daughter: more than 300 acres my father farmed. Ah, when I changed my name to Fison, little did I think that I should ever live to be stived up in a dark, dirty hole like this,—only one room for such a family as us,—and not a stick of furniture in it a broker would give sixpence for, and often nothing to eat!

"Why, at the farm, we seemed to get house room and fire and food for next to nothing. The house went with the farm, and a fine old place it was, big enough for a squire. Now and

then father bought a load of coals, but it was chiefly wood we used. We'd to buy butcher's meat and flour; but then father had sold the beasts and the corn, so that that didn't seem like buying, and we made our own bread, and butter, and cheese, and hams, and bacon, and brewed our own beer; and then we'd milk, and cream, and eggs, and honey, and fresh pork and poultry, and fruit and vegetables, just as much as we wanted.

"Ah, don't I wish my poor children had the old house and orchard and garden to run about in! It's red herrings they've got to smell,—and think themselves lucky, too,—instead of roses. All sorts of flowers we'd got: great hollyhocks up to the bedroom windows, and roses all over the house, and standards as well; there must have been pretty nigh 200 of them. Shouldn't I like to see my poor dears poking about in the ditches for eggs, as I used; and the horsemen lifting them up for a ride when the horses were coming home from the plough?

"Everything there was so green and clean, and bright and quiet,—so different from this great, black, nasty, noisy place. When you pushed the window open in the morning, the roses knocked against it, and rattled the dew down on the laurels; and you could smell the cows' breath, and the honeysuckles; and Sunday mornings—we used to get up a bit later of a Sunday—you could hear the church bells.

They ring 'em here at eight ; but it don't sound a bit like the same, and the churches all look so grimy : outside, anyways ; I can scarce remember what the inside of a church is like, it's so long since I've been in one. What clothes have I or the poor dear children to go to church in ? However, I've not brought 'em up quite heathens ; I've taught them their prayers, and read 'em to them now and again out of an old Bible we've got left : I expect that's because it's so worn, and torn, and dirty, no one would give half a farthing for it. And I try to keep them from running about with other boys and girls in the streets on Sundays, and learning more bad words and ways than they can help, poor dears.

“ At our church at home there wasn't evening service,—only afternoon ; so, on fine summer evenings, when we were little, mother used to take us girls, and some of the boys too if they were in the way and didn't mind coming, into the summer-house, and then we read a chapter, verse and verse about, and sang hymns. Sometimes we sat outside on the steps ; there was one of them great crinkly stones, like ram's horns, on each side, and a lot of blue flags.

“ Ah, deary me, dear mother and father have been lying in the grave-yard at home this ever so long. Mother went first ; and then my brothers, who'd always been set against Tom, tried worse than ever to keep me from him.

I can't exactly say why. They called him 'Towney,' because he was assistant in a chemist's shop in the market town: sometimes they called him 'Lob-lolly boy.' He was good-looking then, poor fellow, and he dressed smarter, and talked nicer, and behaved prettier than they did. He knew a good deal more about most things, but, of course, he didn't understand country matters as well; and so they used to call him 'Miss Nancy,' and try to make him look silly by egging him on to do things they thought he couldn't do; but sometimes Tom turned the tables on them there.

"Mother always took to Tom: he'd a nice gentle way with her. Father didn't dislike him, like the boys, but still he never exactly took to him. He said he'd nothing to say against the young man, but still he couldn't believe he'd ever do much in the world for all his cleverness. Our family was all very keen for getting on in the world, and uncommonly well some of them have done,—they ought to be ashamed to leave my children to starve as they do! Many a meal my father's given, and many a pound he's lent their fathers, ay, and themselves too, when they weren't as well off as they are now.

"However, mother won father over; besides, he never liked to thwart me; so when poor mother died he wouldn't let the boys persuade him against Tom.

"I can't say exactly what it was that made me fancy Tom so much,—perhaps because my brothers went against him. I'd as comfortable a home as a girl could wish to have, and my own way in it. My father wouldn't deny me anything he could get for me, and my brothers were very kind too, in everything except about Tom; and even that they meant for kindness. They were always bragging about my good looks (much good they did me, and much there's left of them), and my butter ('taint often I taste a bit now), and I don't know what all; and so they said poor Tom wasn't good enough for me, and there were plenty of their young farmer friends who were willing enough to snap me up.

"They were all richer than Tom, and some were as good-looking, perhaps better; but somehow my heart stuck to Tom. You can't get away from your fate, you know. I can't honestly say I'm sorry I married him, even now, though I have often said so in my tempers, when he's aggravated me by saying he wished he'd never married me, and that he was dead, and all that, when he's been getting drunk to drown his care, instead of keeping quit of the cursed thing, and looking out to do the best he could for the woman he married and the children he brought into the world (they didn't ask to come, poor dears), as a man should.

"You can't resist God's will, and it is God I

fancy that makes a man and woman love each other. If it ain't, it would often be hard to say what it is that makes 'em. No: though I've had as hard a life as any woman ever had, one I little thought I should ever have had,—some women brought up like me would say they didn't never ought to have had it,—but what's the sense of quarrelling with what can't be altered? It is God's will, and there's an end of it. Spite of my hard life, I can't downright say I'm sorry I married Tom. If I'd taken one with more money, or luck, I might have had to smart for it some other way. No: it's our fate; so why should there be words about it? Tom loves me, and I love him, though both of us have a queer way of showing on it sometimes.

“But this I will say, that I've no patience with those idiots of servant girls that marry just for the sake of saying they've got a husband,—when there ain't a mite of love in the case, give up good places just to get called ‘Missis,’—good wages, good food, good treatment; not a care in the world, and not half enough work to do, or it would take some of the silly nonsense out of their lazy flesh and bones. It serves them right when their husbands drub them, and make drudges of them. A woman that gives up a comfortable home for the man she loves, often thinks she's been a fool; but a woman who gives one up just be-

cause she wants to be married to somebody or other, is a downright idiot.

“ When me and Tom married, my father and his put him up in business in his own line in a town about six miles from home, and he did pretty well at first. Our eldest was born there, and we were very happy ; but things didn’t look as bright, long before the second came : I don’t know how it was. Father and brothers said he wasn’t a business man ; anyhow, he was a real kind, good man in those days,—not a word against his character then, poor chap. Even then he owed a good bit of money too,—money they knew they’d never see again, best part of it,—said he was an honest well-meaning fellow. All they could say against him was that it was a pity he wasn’t a bit sharper, and hadn’t better luck. No doubt he’d have done better if he’d started in the market town ; but he wouldn’t hear of setting up in opposition to his old master.

“ Well, when we failed, Tom’s father hadn’t any more money to lend him, and pretty nigh called him a swindler, and me as bad. My father wasn’t as savage as that, but he wasn’t best pleased—for he’d paid down a good bit more than old Fison—that his money should have gone for nothing so soon. He was kind as ever to me, but he was very cold to Tom. Best thing he could do, father said, was to get a journeyman’s place of some kind, and not

risk any more of other folks' money, when he hadn't the wit to make any for himself, nor them neither, out of it. But poor Tom, naturally enough, wanted to be in business for himself, and I wanted him to be myself, and talked father over, but it wasn't much he'd give. We got a little business in London : papers, and toys, and tobacco, and sweet-stuff, and such,—all mixed. We soon made an end of that, and then there was no one to help us. Tom's father wouldn't even answer his letter, and my father was dead, and my brothers said they might perhaps give something to keep me and my children from starving, if we were left by ourselves, but not a penny to support my good-for-nothing husband in idleness. That was kind, wasn't it? Ah, that's a true bit in the Bible about not going into your brother's house in the day of your calamity ! Neighbours *are* better than brothers, often. When my brothers wouldn't do anything for us, a neighbour, though he was almost a stranger, got Tom a dispenser's berth. We'd to pinch, as we thought then, to make the money hold out ; but it's more than we ever got since, and we should think it a fortune now. Besides, it was respectable,—in the line Tom was brought up to. He plucked up heart a bit, and said he'd study for a doctor ; but, law bless you, what's the good of any man talking about studying for anything new in London, when he's to work from morn-

ing to night for his living, and has got a wife and children to support ?

“Tom lost that berth through being run over by an omnibus, and lay ever so long in hospital. While he was there I starved, and I sold pretty near everything we had, to keep us off the parish. I couldn't bear the thought of the House then, though I've often had to take relief since,—me, whose father was a churchwarden and a guardian.

“When Tom came out, he had to take just anything he could get: he couldn't be a picker and chooser, poor fellow. Somehow he never kept anything long, though that wasn't his fault; for it was only odd jobs that he could get, for the most part, and them he did get less and less respectable. It was then he first took to drinking; though before he took so little that my brothers, and father, too, used to laugh at him for a milk-sop.

“Drink did us no good, and down we came to what we are now. Seven or eight years, off and on, he's been working in the docks, one side of the river or the other. How we've lived I don't know; sometimes without the taste of meat in our mouths for weeks together, and sometimes with no food at all,—glad to jump at an old crust of dry bread.

“It ain't to be called living. If it wasn't for the children, I shouldn't care how soon I was out of it. We've lost two,—our eldest

and our littlest ; though it *ain't* a loss, but a happy release for the poor dears. Often, of a night, I wish that God would forgive us our sins, and then the gas would blow us up, or the roof tumble in and bury us all together. There don't seem any good in getting up of a morning to struggle on again in such a life as ours."

XIV.

PLEBEIAN FLOWER SHOWS.

A JULY afternoon sun was blazing down on the Broad Sanctuary when I turned beneath the shady archway that leads into Dean's Yard. Carriages were rolling through it; carriages were setting down their freights at the gate of the yard's quadrangle of grass and trees; outside the rails, gratefully availing themselves of the flickering shade of overhanging plane-leaves, stood waiting carriage-horses, champing their bits with foaming mouths, and impatiently tossing off the pestering flies that presumed to light on their proud heads and buzz about their aristocratic noses. The upper windows of the houses that give upon the yard were thrown up, and amused eyes looked down thence on the motley crowd that made a merry hubbub in the wontedly cleri-

cally-sedate enclosure. High up, on one side, the gilding of the Victoria Tower flashed in the blue, cloudless sky; on another, the twin towers of the Abbey rose above the roofs, seemingly almost as white and sharply-cut as if just fresh from the pious hands of the builders of "the elder days of art." Out of the low grey school, with its squat archways, gnawn like bones by time, and the iron-grey, more ancient portion of its wall patched above with dingy brick, like the ragged fringe of a dusty Welsh wig overlapping a hard-featured veteran's forehead, "Westminsters" were trooping, as Westminsters have trooped for nearly a decade more than three centuries: Westminsters, in the "chimney-pot" which seems to be the modern regulation headgear of the non-foundation public school-boy; Westminsters, arm-in-arm and four abreast, *en route* for Vincent Square, in gay cricketing flannels; Westminsters, in collegiate cap and gown and "white choker"—the tiniest, and most solemnly self-important, amongst them looking ludicrously like right reverend Tom Thumbs. A few lingered at the palisades to peep at the show, or to chat with fair young friends and beaming aunts and mammas within; one or two sauntered over the grass-plat in collegiate costume, with a *de-haut-en-bas*-like drawling gait (most aristocratic of mortals, in his own estimation, is the English public schoolboy);

but "charity-bobs," in muffin-caps and bands, and very seedy at the elbows, boisterously chasing one another, and stray, sulphur-winged butterflies, over the fast-yellowing lawn, littered with prematurely withered leaves, were far more numerous represented in the enclosure. Plebeian small boys of all kinds enjoyed a Saturnalia in the garden of the Dean's Yard. The little cockneys crowded the seat of a reading-desk, placed in readiness for the noble distributor of the prizes, as their holiday-making parents crowd a cab, grinning applause, in constantly supplanted detachments, of a very humorous "little vulgar boy," who thumped the lectern and favoured the public with extemporaneous discourse as energetically as a ranter-preacher. The saucy little varlets were not in the slightest degree awed by the presence of the potent, grave, and reverend dignitaries who patrolled the grass in the well-to-do, glossy-black sleekness, and sleepily-sly good-humour, which characterize English rooks and English clergymen who have nests in the shadow of a cathedral. The learned, variously-and-copiously gifted Dean was the only untypical parson in appearance there. "Which is the Dean?" I heard a good woman anxiously ask of her Westminster friend, who was showing her the local lions. "What, that pale little gentleman in the trousers?" was the querist's disappointed rejoinder, when the

Dean was pointed out. "I thought Deans was fat, red-faced gentlemen, as wore breeches." The Westminster parishioner was scandalised by this irreverent mode of discussing Dr. Stanley's claims to the character of (literal) Broad Churchman, and answered, in a tone of loftily-indignant offence, "That's all you know, then. He may well look pale, for he's allus a-readin' or a-writin', or a-doin' sumfink or other good, as a parson ought to was." Other popular critics expressed disappointed surprise that the lords and ladies who rubbed shoulders with costermongers and charwomen on the ground, did not stand out with unmistakable distinctness from the bulk of well-dressed people—so far as dress went, indeed, were even less "splendacious" than anonymous assisters at the show. In only one instance, however, so far as I could see, did these criticisms take a form offensive to their subjects. An elderly "strong-minded woman," of the Ida Pfeiffer type, elbowed her way through the greasy throng with undaunted *sung froid*. Her petticoats, of somewhat peculiar cut, were kilted; a broad-brimmed hat shaded a bronzed face and short-cut, grizzled, capless hair; the lady had also what might pass for a beard and a moustache. "It's a man dressed up," whispered the women through whose gossiping clusters the self-reliant "unprotected female" forced her way

—loud enough for her to hear. She smiled with grimly contemptuous compassion for her unenfranchised sex, when she overheard the comment; to be taken for a mere *man*, she evidently considered no compliment.

The general tone of the gathering, however, was mutual good-temper and cheerful loyalty. At one corner of the enclosure a Union-Jack lazily rustled in the fitful breeze; in another stood a tent, wreathed with leaves and flowers, from which young ladies, who worked harder than any "slavey," brought out unfailing supplies of tea and bread-and-butter, for the women and children who were admitted in detachments to the seats enclosed in front of the tent. The tea was poured from great battered urns of zinc, that looked like exaggerated oil-cans, and its plenty, its strength, and the nature of the attendance, quite excited the good women. They blushed with delight, and shook with merriment, at the thought of being waited on by smiling, soft-spoken young ladies in silks and satins, gossamery muslins, and lace falls. "So you've had some tea, have yer, Bob?" said a radiant grandmother to her little grandson, as he issued from the privileged enclosure, wiping his freshly greasy mouth on his antequely greasy sleeve. "Well, now, it's sumfink like a show, says I, when they gives yer sumfink to heat and drink!"

Meanwhile, strolling or reclining on the

grass, and seated on very dusky rout-seats and rush-bottomed chairs beneath the welcome shadow of the trees, the bulk of the company, gentle and simple, listened to the music of a police band, whose puffing, thumping, and cymbal-clashing members were watched proudly by their wives and children, delighted at finding the populace-hated force figuring, for however short a time, in a generally popular capacity. The show proper was contained in a flag-decked marquee. "In everything give thanks," in leaves and flowers, and "God save the Queen," in white letters on a red ground, with a crown above the scriptural motto, were the appropriate, pious and loyal, internal decorations of the tent, erected, under clerical patronage, in the shadow of one of the noblest fanes of the State Church. The fact that one of the Princesses had been to see the flowers seemed to give huge satisfaction to the exhibitors, who lingered about their exhibits, watching the glances, and trying to catch the words, of those who inspected them, as anxiously, and as jealously, as a struggling artist notes the effect produced by his first-admitted picture. "Well, I don't think much on 'em—I've a-had as good myself," was the uncomplimentary judgment passed upon the flowers by a non-competitor, possibly envious of the social distinction which her exhibiting neighbours had attained. The proportion of blossom to stem

and leaf was, perhaps, rather small on the average ; but, considering the places in which the plants had been reared, the show, nevertheless, was exceedingly pretty. Fuchsias and geraniums were most numerous represented : one of the fuchsias, trained upon a frame, was quite a giant. There were ferns in pot, and ferns in a handsome case. There were calceolarias, begonias, lobelias, balsams, musk-plants, nasturtiums, lupins, sweet peas, and almost solitarily-blossomed American marigolds — the precious flowers made prominent by paper ruffs. The favourite creeper appeared to be the creeping Jenny, which hung in pots all round the tent—pots which were constantly losing their equilibrium, as the larking youngsters outside bulged in the canvas. A good many of the exhibitors were school-children ; some of the neatest of the plants came from Westminster Hospital ; and a pathetic detachment had been sent from the Westminster Workhouse. A pauper window-gardener must regard his flower with a very peculiar interest, as being almost the only property which he can claim. The mode in which the prizes had been assigned seemed to give general satisfaction, but, of course, there were some exceptions. “They did ought to have giv a prize to that, I think,” said the mother of a defeated exhibitor, as she pointed out to a friend a creeping Jenny which her son had trained round a Lilli-

putian summer-house of wire. "And he've done another beauty, jest like the Prince of Wales's plume." "Won't my little Jack be disappointed?" said another mother of a "nowhere" son. "His brother have got a prize for a plant jest the feller of his'n." The show of fruit consisted merely in the strawberries and cherries exposed for sale, together with ices, ginger-beer, lemonade, cakes, and sweet-stuff, on the refreshment stall. The small boys buzzed about this stall like flies—especially when they found that their covetous eyes ever and anon induced pitying beholders to stand treat. One urchin, a little charity-boy, I saw *curtsyng*, in the excess of his excited gratitude, to a lady who had promised him a choice geranium from her greenhouse, as an encouragement of his horticultural tastes.

The English reverence for a lord was amusingly manifested when the earl who was to distribute the prizes made his appearance. He was followed about at a respectful distance by a crowd of scrutinisers, who seemed to think it an intensely interesting fact to discover that a nobleman used a pocket-handkerchief, and shook hands with his acquaintance, just like any common mortal.

The company having crowded round the rostrum, the distribution of the prizes began—their value varying from ten shillings to four. A policeman shouted out the name of the prize-

taker in a stentorian voice, like a crier calling a witness into court. The prize-taker appeared ; the amount of his prize was handed up to the earl, and the earl dropped it into the palm of the prize-taker. There was something funny in the additional value which the money appeared to acquire in the recipients' eyes from having passed through a nobleman's fingers. However, the object was to gratify them, and it was certainly attained. In addition to their prizes each received a little pamphlet on window-gardening from one of the ladies. The prize-giving over, Lord Shaftesbury made a speech on the moral influence of floriculture. Then the Dean made a speech, finishing off with a call for three cheers for his lordship. The cheers having been duly given, a Canon mounted the rostrum, and announced the gratifying fact that the receipts at the gate had completely covered the expenses of the show. The tea, he said, had been given in celebration of the release of the Abyssinian captives. "I trust that we shall have no Abyssinian war next year—though, then, you will get no tea," he added with a chuckle. The mirth which this mild, but most successful joke provoked having subsided, and the obstreperous small boys having temporarily been hushed, hats and helmets were taken off, and "Praise God from whom all blessings flow," was somewhat quaveringly sung beneath the

calm evening sky. A good many of the vocalists, probably, were not much used to psalm-singing. It was a pretty, soothing scene nevertheless, that crowd of miscellaneous worshippers praising God in the island-like quiet of the Dean's Yard, before they went out again into the boisterous London life that was roaring on all sides. The exhibitors carried home their plants as carefully as if they had been first-born babies. One could hardly help pitying the plants, borne away from the grass and trees, and comparatively fresh air, into close confinement for another year.

An East-End Window Garden Show, however, is even more striking than one whose Mark-Tapley-like exhibits have striven hard and successfully to be *joli* under the very "creditable circumstances" of growth in Westminster slums.

A dingy, crowded, East-End thoroughfare is broiling and bustling in the dusty sunshine. Ponderous waggons labour along its stone-trams, laden with sugar-hogsheads perspiring treacle; omnibuses rattle past, with passengers stewing within, and passengers set out to bake in batches on the knife-board. The dirty boots of cabmen, taking their siesta within, dangle from the doors of battered cabs. An irresistible longing for beer appears to have seized

the majority of the population. The bars are crowded, and people who have passed them, suddenly turn back and dive in, taking off their hats and mopping their brows, and expressing aloud, as though onlookers required an apology for their vacillating conduct, their conviction that "A feller *must* have a swig on such a day as thisn." Impecunious personages loaf about the taverns, on the look-out for familiar friends and chance acquaintances, "safe to stand a pint." Sailors, whose bronzed faces shew that they are familiar with tropical suns, seem—at any rate so far as then ecessity for extra drink is concerned—to have been quite as much overcome as landsmen by the English heat. In red shirts that annoy the eye like scarlet geraniums in a hot-house; in blue flannel and dreadnought, in which they have doubled the Horn; in cooler duck and dungaree—they "stagger" across the footpath, with glazed gaze, and idiotically solemn lips, and are easily hauled into another series of beer-shops by their hideous sirens, who are already abroad, without bonnets, and in low-necked white dresses. Guardsmen from the Mint and Tower booze sleepily in filthy bars, nodding their caps, stuck on awry, and greasing their scarlet elbows, over fish-porters' scaly knots and baskets; or stride along with tunic-tails tucked back, loosened stocks, and flushed, fierce faces, as if inclined to run a muck at all they

meet. In the doorways of the stifling little drapers' shops, the master and his maidens gasp together in a bower of drooping "crinolines;" too deliquescent to care whether customers come or not—half hoping, indeed, that they may not be yet a while forced to go again inside. Cross-legged Jew brokers doze stertorously in the easiest easy-chairs to be found in their dusty stock, set out beneath most welcome awnings. The sun-broiled "block ornaments," the blue-bottles, the stagnantly loathsome atmosphere of the butchers' shops, are enough to make you abjure meat for ever. There is some relief in seeing a street-fishmonger break up a case, and haul out a big salmon from a bed of knobby ice; but, when you note the flabby, sanguineous section of the wares already on his stall, fish, too, seems likely, as the Scotch say, for ever after to "give you a scunner." His neighbour is languidly watering, with a "rose" that has half its holes stopped up, halfpenny slices of shrivelled, gritty coconut, temptingly arranged on blue paper mottled with brown patches, on whose greasy surface the water stands in dirty beads. Limp lettuces and wilted onions, beyond the power of water to freshen, form the attractions of the next emporium. The cherries on the fruit-stall are wrinkled and half baked; and the cheap damaged strawberries are piled in an amorphous heap of dusty jam, out of which sluggishly

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trickles juice that looks like semi-coagulated blood. Altogether, life in the East End seems a hopelessly squalid form of existence, as you walk along that busy thoroughfare, and glance up the suffocating lanes that give on it, with their inhabitants sitting in slatternly dishabille upon their doorsteps, panting open-mouthed like dogs.

Suddenly, however, you get a glimpse of dewy stars in the sultry East End gloom.

A white-and-red banner stretches across the mouth of one of the lanes, announcing the "East London Flower-show." You dive down the double row of meanly-built houses, of the colour of ginger-bread burnt in the baking, or a negro afflicted with jaundice, and looking so peevishly weary of having nothing better to stare at from week's end to week's end than their uninteresting opposites. You pass a swarthy Colosseum of a gasometer, and see at the bottom of the lane a pepper-and-salt church, and opposite it, a handsome red-and-black school-house. Across the road stretches a gay string of bunting. Flags, too, flutter from the school-house windows. In front of the door is congregated a crowd of male and female infantry—every other little girl nursing a child only a size smaller than herself, and all staring in solemn silence at a couple of boardmen, stationed like mutes on either side of the doorway. From the bills, you gather that



within the school-house is to be opened a "window-garden" exhibition, to which sixteen East End parishes have contributed. Ragged schools and workhouses are amongst the exhibitors. Down one side of a lofty room on the ground-floor of the school-house, sprawls an extemporised counter, covered with white cloths, on which are somewhat sparsely spotted little archipelagoes of cheap refreshments. Behind it stand extemporised waitresses in their Sunday best, with rosettes of ribbon on their bosoms, and, though nobody as yet appears to require their services, in a high state of gleeful excitement, caused by freedom from everyday-work, and a sense of official importance. At the end of this hall are displayed a few of the chief prize-plants; and some of them are downright bushes. You pay your shilling to the money-taker, when he can spare a moment from nicking the free-admission cards of exhibitors who are surging about his desk, and struggle with them up some stiffish flights of steep stone stairs. Every window in the room at the top of the house is open, and not without need, for otherwise the temperature would be Black-holish. Flagstaffs are thrust out of the windows, and through them you get glimpses of a prospect which is a strange surrounding for a show of locally-reared flowers; a wilderness of smutty tiles and stumpy chimneys, above which tower tall factory-stalks, gas-

works, grimy steeples, and the masts of ships that appear completely hemmed in with masonry. Their presence in such places is as puzzling as the flowers. Both would seem to have dropped from the skies. The plants are ranged in sloping stands, on all sides of the L-shaped room, with banners above, emblazoned with the names of the exhibiting school, parish, and so forth. Sooth to say, the show, for brilliant colour, is considerably more indebted to its bunting than its blossoms. Besides these banners, there are others with texts of Scripture on them; texts of Scripture stretch in parti-colour along the wood-work of the open roof, and in the corners of the room flags fall in folds. A very pretty sight it is; and as such, it is loudly appreciated by the little boys and girls who form the majority of the spectators. They interrupt the reading of the prize-list, and have to be silenced by reproachful *hush, hush, hushes* from the chairman, and perspiring activity on the part of indignant schoolmasters and mistresses, who dart hither and thither amid the throng, seizing on chief offenders like collies in a wilfully confused flock of sheep. Some of the girls are very stylishly got-up in white muslin mantles, gilt combs, and such-like finery, and condescend to their less smartly-dressed school-fellows with an evident consciousness of constituting a social *élite*. There are no swells amongst the

boys, and fewer clean hands and faces than could be wished for in little neighbours, whose bashful anxiety to get out of your way generally results in their shoving some other little boy up against you.

Seated in a horse-shoe are a dozen or more of those admirable men, the "working clergy" of the East End. (By-the-bye, is there not something either invidious or satirical in the epithet "working" so distinctively applied? Ought there to be any clergy who do no work?) Their faces are a pleasant study. To begin with: in spite of the unpleasant places in which the lines of clerical life have fallen to them, they almost all look cheerful; and gilding this habitual look, there is a gleam of abnormal excitement. The peculiarity of their "business look" is also piquant. You can see that they go heart and soul, and with a considerable sense of personal importance, into what most men would consider the unprofitable and peddling details of parochial book-keeping—the finance of "penny banks," and such like. But their business has left no furrows of carking greed and unscrupulous knowingness upon their countenances. They slave cheerfully for others, and as to all extra-professional matters, look as unsophisticated as children. A good many of the children with whom *they* come in contact, indeed, in their court and alley visitations, have a much more "worldly aspect."

Nearly one hundred prizes are announced, six shillings and eightpence being a frequently recurring amount. Then the excellent chairman, who is looked upon with affectionate awe as having written letters to the "Times" about the show, makes a pleasant little speech, all the "points" of which are rapturously applauded. Then the incumbent of the parish also makes a pleasant little speech, which is similarly received. He praises the perspiring chairman, but praises still more loudly the perspiring curate, and finishes off by proposing a vote of thanks to him, which, of course, is carried unanimously; the small boys holding up a couple of hands apiece. The curate returns thanks, and is applauded. A layman proposes a vote of thanks to "our respective chairman," and is applauded. The vote is unanimously carried amid great applause. Everybody appears inclined to applaud everything; and when the chairman, in returning thanks, announces that a real live member of parliament will distribute the prizes in a day or two, the assembly becomes ecstatic. Finally again amid great applause, the exhibition is formally declared to be open, and the company begins to circulate to inspect it.

The show of blossom, as I have hinted, is comparatively small; but that such fine healthy plants should have been reared in the mephitic

air of the East End, appears astounding. And if the show of blossom *is* small, what there is of it is brilliant. In the whole exhibition, there is only one cluster with the faded, sickly look that might be supposed typical of East End flowers. A few of the plants, moreover, are in splendid blossom. There is a huge musk with almost as much gold as green in it, and an appropriately named "Daniel Lambert" geranium that would do credit to a conservatory. Balsams appear to be a favourite plant with the East Enders, and still more, creeping Jennies. There are oak-leaf geraniums, ivy-plants, a little fig-tree, and a Japanese honeysuckle. Some of the pots are tastefully swathed in tissue-paper. That a large proportion of the plants are literally the products of window-gardens, you can tell from their fan-like form. The upper sides of the leaves all turn the same way. It is curious to remark the long curved stalks which some of the geraniums have thrown out from behind in their eagerness to drink in the light at every pore.

Every one first rushes to see his own plant. The officials experience a little difficulty in explaining to disappointed competitors how their "exhibits" could possibly have been excluded from the prize list, and the explanation at last is evidently taken under protest. Still the harmony of the meeting remains

unruffled. The disappointed ones fully believe that the judges meant well, but are not quite so firmly convinced as the successful ones of their infallibility, and cherish more fondly than ever a silent faith in the unsurpassability of their own pet products. Parochial feeling is strong in the parsons. They delightedly clap prize-taking parishioners upon the back, and carry off their lady friends in triumph to look at "*our* stand"; expatiating on the merits of musks, as if they were most rare exotics. One clergyman sees a "highly commended" ticket unappropriated, and sticks it into a parishioner's pot, observing: "It may as well be there as doing nothing." The joy of the youthful prize-takers is comically pompous. "Have *you* got a prize, Jim?" asks a half-incredulous little girl of a beaming little boy.

"Yes," says Jim, curtly, trying to look as if he had been certain of it.

"How much, Jim?"

"Oh, five bob," answers the boy with affected indifference.

The little girl gazes on him with worshipful eyes, and is quite proud of being seen in his company, and on sufficiently familiar terms with such a public character as to be able to call him Jim. The mothers of the Jims more plainly show their exultation. With big babies at their breasts, they wander about, stopping every minute to talk over their sons'

triumph with their gossips. Heat and happiness combined have made the good women's faces as red as poppies. The men who are going round with syringes to water the flowers, take pity on the flushed, hand-tied matrons, and hold up great water-jugs to their lips, out of which they drink like horses out of pails.

Altogether, it is a pretty scene of good-fellowship amongst all; and the character of the show, no doubt, has something to do with this good-fellowship. There is a humanising influence in the culture of flowers: they remove cantankerousness from the moral atmosphere, as well as carbonic acid from the air.

XV.

"THE LIMB."

It chanced that a friend of mine (some years ago just settled in London) who had been mooning about on pilgrimage to places of literary interest, having rambled through the Temple, crossed the street and turned into Serle's Place, Shire Lane of old. As he stood there looking at the site of the Devil Tavern and thinking of Ben Jonson; at Temple Bar, and thinking of Dr. Johnson and Goldsmith,

traitors' heads and the ghosts of old bankers' clerks flitting amongst dusty ledgers containing the accounts of Messrs. Child's dead and buried customers; as he was calling to mind, moreover, that in the alley in which he stood,—soon to be swept away to furnish an infinitesimal portion of the site for the huge new Palace of Justice,—the Tatlers' Club met at the "Trumpet," and the Kit-cat Club at a mutton-pie shop,—whilst he was thus tranquilly thinking of the past, his thoughts were abruptly brought back to the present by a tug at his coat-tail.

He turned and found that a youngster,—clad in a ragged shirt, so black and greasy that it seemed to be made of lamp-cloths, and a pair of man's fustian breeches braced up to the armpits with twine, and tattered into vandykes at the knees,—had just drawn his silk handkerchief out of his pocket, and was scurrying off with it like a fox with a fowl in his mouth.

My friend, X— let us call him, pursued. In Carey Street the young thief doubled and plunged into the recently evacuated thickly-built town of tenements which have been swept away to make room for the new Courts of Justice. The place looked then like a city shattered by a siege and afterwards depopulated by pestilence. Almost all the visible window-frames were smashed; from some frames the glass had entirely vanished.

The boy ran through passages wriggling like worms, and so narrow that his pursuer could almost touch the bulging houses on both sides. On sped the lad between rows of broken, dusty, chalk-marked shutters, holed with stars and hearts, and blistered doors secured with rusty bars and padlocks; along colonnades of timber as black as bog oak with the ingrained, greasy dirt of many a generation, and under arches threatening to smother him with a fall of green slimy plaster and blue-moulded laths, and the tottering tops of Tudor houses projecting story over story like inverted flights of stairs. If X— had had eyes for anything but his quarry, he would have seen, too, Stuart houses and Georgian houses, with grimy flutings, cherubs' cheeks, grapes and vine-leaves on their door-posts and lintels, and weeds growing on their flat, lead-covered pent-houses. But X—'s chief concern just then was not to lose his breath, or sight of the young rascal ahead, as he dodged in and out of alleys that ran into one another like rat-runs or rabbit-burrows. Past flights of worn stone steps, notched at their edges as caterpillars scallop cabbage-leaves, leading up into little quadrangles of dimly red old houses, with little black metal plates, duskily white-lettered "Courts of Judicature Act" nailed outside, and a litter of yellow papers and faded red tape within, the boy ran on. Into once-thronged Hemlock Court and Chair Court and

Newcastle Court, into which in its brawling days policemen even in couples scarcely liked to venture, X— pursued him, without seeing any other living creature,—man woman, or child. Past dead-rat-like shut-up, beetle-browed public-houses, in which in days gone by many a villany had been perpetrated or schemed; past gloomy gulfs of dirt, dusty, smoky brick and mortar, and rusty gas and water pipes, in which men in dirty shirts and frocks were plying the pick on roofless walls that still towered, looking drearily uncomfortable, with bed-room grates not yet wrenched out of them, and dank paper fluttering in the air or falling in fragments like rain-rotted leaves, the zigzag, circular chase went on.

“You can’t get out this way,” cried a shawlhooded old Irishwoman, when the boy was about to corner himself in a *cul de sac*, at the bottom of which stood a grim old pile, doubtless appropriated by some squatter, announcing itself, by means of a roughly painted board over its almost paintless door, to be “*The Model Lodging House*.”

Turning on his heel as on a pivot the boy rushed from this caravanserai in the core of the wilderness to its fringes, where a few small shop-keepers still lingered, whilst their next-door neighbours were packing up and going away. From a depopulated poor neighbourhood the boy, with X— still after him, darted

into a densely populated one: houses crammed from cellar floor to roof,—floor damp with foetid slime, roof that let in the snow and the rain. Dirty, pale children hopped and squatted about the narrow thoroughfares like a plague of Egyptian frogs. Dirty, pale, squalidly clad, or rather half-clad, women were drudging, idling, gossiping, wrangling, drinking gin. Some who had begun to drink, that they might forget their hopeless misery, the fire-water had so maddened that they were fighting like fiends, or vomiting foul language that even fiends might have been ashamed of. A good many of the men seemed to have had all the pith taken out of them; others, brawny enough, looked as if they used their strength to no good end.

If the lad met with some obstacles here in his flight, X— met with more in his pursuit. Perhaps all the people he ran up against did not get into his way of malice prepense, but they did not try to get out of it; and hulking young roughs, lounging on the pavement, certainly seemed to extend rather than to retract their sprawled-out legs as X— rushed by them. He managed, however, to keep the urchin still in view, until he dived into a marine-stores shop at a corner; a shop that had two doors,—one opening on the alley which ran at right angles to the lane from which he entered. In the shop X— pounced upon him, and seized his pocket handkerchief.

"Don't let him have it, Sanders," cried the boy to the keeper of the shop; meanwhile trying to retain his hold upon his prize, and kicking lustily at his captor's shins with his one boot. "'Tain't his: I found it."

"Now don't you be sarcy, young un," the man answered, "or the gen'leman will give ye in charge. I s'pose, sir, you won't take the trouble, as you've got yer handkerchief back. What we does when we ketches 'em priggin' is to give 'em a towellin' and then send 'em about their business. It saves time an' trouble, an' they cares more for it than they does for a wiggin' from the beak."

Whereupon the young monkey was off again like a hare.

"Not much chance of my giving that youngster in custody, or 'towellin' him either," said panting X—.

"No, sir," answered Sanders, with a grin. "The wonder to me is how you came to ketch him at all. Them boys dodges like a cracker, and wriggles like a eel. Anyhow, I don't think you could ketch him now. You seem quite blown: better sit down, sir, till you have got your wind agin, if you don't mind a bit of dirt."

When X— had had his rest, he followed a man who had been bargaining with Sanders for some second-hand locks out of the shop, and asked him if he knew anything of the little thief.

"Well, yes, I do," the man answered; "but you don't want to lock him up, do yer, sir? It's more his mother's fault than his. The Limb we call him,—I don't know what's his right name. He's bad enough as he is, but it'd do him more harm than good, to my mind, sendin' of him to prison. There's the makin's of a fine lad in him, though you mightn't think it; but he'll be downright ruined if he's let to run wild much longer. His mother don't care nought about him, 'cept when he brings her money for the things he's prigged or what he's begged. That's how he has to get his livin', poor little chap, an' it's a poor livin' at the best, as you may see. Best part o' what he makes she takes, an' if he don't get anythink, why then he may go without for what she cares.

"My missis gives the poor little chap a bit o' bread now and agin, but we can't do much for him that way, for we've young uns of our own; and I say a word to him sometimes when I sees him at his games, and he don't cheek me as he would most folk; but, lor bless ye, it goes in at one ear and out at t'other, an' no wonder. Besides what's the good o' jawin' him when you can't put him in the way o' betterin' hisself?"

My friend X— was a young man of vaguely philanthropic tastes and tendencies. He felt well disposed to his fellow-creatures at large,

and had sometimes wished that he could be of some good to somebody in particular. He had not been as yet, but he thought that he might be of some use to the Limb if he could only get hold of him,—that, at any rate, trying to benefit him could not do either the Limb or himself any harm; and he told the man what he was thinking about.

“Well, if them’s your wishes, sir,” said the man, “I should say it’s what the parsons call a providence as the poor young warmint tried to prig your wive. Yes, I could get him to come to me fast enough: I’ve on’y got to promise him somethink to eat. But he’d be pretty sure to try to bolt as soon as ever he saw you, and if you did get him away through me, his wixen of a mother would be ollus at me. But who cares? I’m a parient myself, a different sort o’ parient from she, though I say it as oughtn’t, and it ’d be a shame, that it would, to let the poor little un go to the bad when there’s a chance for him. I’m a poor man, but I’m a honest British tradesman,—John Rusden is my name, sir,—and I’m not goin’ to be afeared of a drunken old beggar woman.

“Tell’ee what I’ll do, sir. I’m safe to see the young un some time or other to-day, and I’ll tell him to come round to my place for some grub between eleven and twelve to-morrer mornin’, say,—if that’ll be conwenient to you, sir,—and then you can try your ’and

on him. Come along, and I'll show you my place."

As they went, X—asked John what his trade was.

"Ne'er a one in particular," he answered, with a laugh. "I'm a Jack-o'-all-trades, sir, and master o' none. I turn my hand to anythink I've a chance of. Jest now I'm a box-maker. I got a lot o' wood cheap, an' the fittin's I can git reas'nable at second-hand, an' when I've scoured 'em an' hiled 'em they look as good as new. I know a man that'll take as many boxes as I can make jest now, so I'm in luck. Here's my 'ouse, sir. Well, then, to-morrer mornin' between eleven an' twelve: you'll know your way?"

When X—reached John Rusden's next morning he found the Jack-of-all-trades busy planing in a tiny built-in back yard very much like the bottom of a dry well.

"He ain't come yet, sir," said John. "My missis has gone to look him up. I fancy he must have seen us talkin' together, an' so he smells a rat. But my missis is safe to bring 'im. She's set her mind on the poor little beggar's not losin' a chance when it's offered him, an' he ain't a mite afeared o' her,—can't see why he should be o' me. I don't like to keep you out here in the cold,—work keeps me warm, but you'll be half-starved. If you don't mind a lot o' noisy young uns,

will you step indoors and sit down, an' I'll make up the fire? The young uns is ollus a lettin' of it out. But don't you show till the missis have got the boy inside, or he'll bolt sure as a gun."

X— having elected to remain in the yard, John, as he worked, told his visitor what he knew of the Limb's family history.

"The mother's been livin' about here a goodish while. He don't know who his father was, p'r'aps she don't neither. The father couldn't ha' been much loss if he was like the mother. The sooner you lost both such parients the better, I should say. But if he *was* a out-an'-outer like that old wixen, the boy's a puzzle to me; for, as I was saying to you, he's got the makin's of a fine lad in him, and surely he got his good from somebody, and there aint a mite o' good in his mother. Mother Brimstone they call her, partly becos she goes out shammin' to sell matches, but most becos she's sich a fury of a temper. Though who's to say? P'r'aps she was a good woman once. Trouble changes people queerly, an' then if they fly to drink to forget it they might as well hang theirselves outright and ha' done with it. Them as was the best before is the wussest arterwards. Anyhow Mother Brimstone's a drunken old thief now. Sometimes I think she's *too* old to be the boy's mother, but then when women takes to drink it's unpossible to say

what age they is. It spoils their looks. Fine young women I've seen ruined that way. Women is so proud of their good looks, whether they've got 'em or not,—some as has least on 'em is the proudest,—that it beats me, it do, how they can take to Jacky. I know a young 'oman—she's quite a young 'oman still—that looked like a rose when she fust come from the country, an' look at her now,—what's she like? More like a old cabbage-stalk in the gutter, an' that's where she'll come to. 'Tain't London air, but London gin as has done it. She's a brute of a husband, to be sure, poor gal, who whops her,—whops her now for gittin' lushier than hisself; but Mother Brimstone haint 'ad that excuse, I should say. My belief is she ollus was a wixen, an' if she ever 'ad a husband, good or bad, she druv him from her by her tantrums. *She* ain't a 'woman likely to fly to gin becos her husband walloped her. She'd drink the gin fust and give him her ten commandments arterwards, when she'd aggerawated him to try it on. If it worn't that the boy somehow seems fond of the old witch, I couldn't believe nohow that he was her son. It don't seem natural,—do it, sir?—that you should love an old wixen as don't do nuffink for ye, an' never gives ye nuffink, and 'ould let ye starve for what she cared, if you didn't bring *her* nuffink; but if it aint natur' as makes the boy stick by old Mother

Brimstone, I'm fair beat to make out what it is. He might cut away from her easy, but, you see, he don't, an' I'm afeared we shall have some trouble to get him away from her,—*he'll* bother, I mean, let alone her. She'll give it me hot, I know, but I'll risk that. She'll make out that she was the fondest mother as ever was, an' kick an' spit an' scratch to prove it, an' yet she used to drub him horful. The neighbours had to hinterfere, or she'd ha' beat the life out of his poor little bones. She don't whop him now, 'cept when she's wery far gone : he 'on't stand it. He don't kick her as he do other folk when they lay a hand on him : you've seen him kick and felt him, too, haven't ye, sir ? He jest gives her a shove back, an' 'ooks it. He used to stand still to be welted when he was littler, but natur don't require ye to let folk pitch into you for nuffink, mother or no mother. A nice mother ! makin' that poor little feller lie, an' beg, an' steal for her, as she do : a good example she sets him. I've heard her a-whinin' when I've come acrost her out sellin' her laces an' matches an' that,—sometimes the old humbug sells tracks,—about her bein' a poor lone widdy, as had seen better days ; an' at fust I could scarce believe my eyes as it was the same old wixen I'd heard cursin' and swearin' an hour or two afore. Once I heard her comin' the religious dodge over two old ladies she'd cornered in Lincoln's

Inn Fields. Good old souls they looked, as if they was country ladies jest come up to town to see their lawyer. Well, sir, Mother Brimstone did the pious patter as well as any parson, —a deal faster than some o' them can manage it, an' she didn't hum and hah neither. I declare to you it made me sick to hear that old wretch rattling out the sacred names as she did. And she gammoned the old ladies,—half made them cry,—an' they gave her some money afore I could get up and start her.

"'Poor thing, poor thing,' I heard one on 'em say: 'see how she's hurrying home to her starving children!'

"Mother Brimstone sartinly *did* slope pretty quick when she caught sight o' me."

But here one of John's little girls rushed into the yard, exclaiming,—

"Father, father, mother's come home with the Limb, and he's a-kickin' like anythink!"

The boy, who had got a glimpse of X— in the back yard, fancied that he was betrayed into the hands of his enemies, and when John and X— entered the room, was butting like a ram at Mrs. Rusden, who had planted herself with her back to the front door to prevent his escape, and lashing out mercilessly at her shins.

"You ungrateful young warmint," exclaimed John, seizing the little rascal by the nape of the neck and lifting him into a chair as if he

had been a cat. "Who wants to harm ye, you young fool? Here's my missis 'as lost her mornin' runnin' about to hunt ye up to git a good meal an' a good friend, an' that's the way you behave to them as would be your benefactors. You disarve a good drubbin', you do. Hows'ever, as I promised ye the grub, you shall have it. Git the plate out of the cupboard, children."

The Limb, who was ravenously hungry, at once fell to worrying the food like a wild beast. Hunger appeased, he glanced round furtively, as if meditating a bolt; but planting himself between his guest and the door, John thus went on:—

"Now this kind gen'leman, instid o' whoppin' ye, or havin' you locked up for steelin' his han'kercher, was a-goin' to put ye in the way o' gittin' plenty o' good food and drink honest,—not like you live now, half-starved, an' havin' to sneak about like a rat, an' cut away when you see a pleeceman comin',—an' warm clothes to wear, an' a warm bed to lay in. And now, like a young fool, you've been an' gone an' thrown your chance o' betterin' yourself away, behavin' that fashion. Down-right sorry an' ashamed I am as I stuck up to the gen'leman for ye. When you've finished your grub you can walk, an' you needn't show your face 'ere agin. It'll be no good your comin' whimperin' when you want a bit o' bread."

The artful John had achieved a triumph,—he had made the Limb anxious to stay and hear more of these good things that might have been his if he had behaved better. He began to wish he had. He looked at X—as if he thought he must be rather soft, but this very reflection almost dissipated any lingering dread he might have had of him. At last he said, "What is't as the gen'leman wants me to do?"

"Well, the first thing," answered X—, "would be for you to go to a bath, and get your hair cut, and put on some new clothes I'll give you. And then I'll take you to the place where I live. You'll have plenty to eat by a good fire in the kitchen, and a snug little room and a nice warm bed down there."

"But what'll there be for me to do?" asked the Limb.

"Not much at first," replied X. "I want to put you in the way of learning to do something for yourself. I can get you into a day-school not far off, and then, out of school, when you've learnt your lessons and had your meals, you can do little odd jobs for me."

"But won't there be no money? Shan't I arn nuffink?" asked the Limb.

"Well," replied X—, half offended, half amused, "I hope you will be able to earn a good bit of money one of these fine days, and make a good use of it. But just at starting,

you see, I shall have to pay for your schooling and your keep and your clothes, and what you can do for me at present won't come to much; but if you behave yourself I'll allow you a little pocket-money."

"Well, I don't mind tryin' on it for a bit," condescendingly remarked the Limb.

X— left money for his outfit with the Rusdens, and in the evening John brought him round to X—'s chambers in the Adelphi, clad, kempt, and clean.

When X— had first propounded his project of housing the boy to the plump housekeeper of the pile of chambers in which he occupied a second-floor set, she had flatly refused to receive "a little thief of a beggar boy" as a lodger in her basement story: she knew the landlord wouldn't approve of it, she said. The terms which X— offered, however, mastered her scruples, aided, it may without lack of charity be supposed, by some such train of thought as this: "Mr. X— will have to pay the gal an' me jest the same, but the boy'll be able to run his arrands, clean his boots, an' that, an' I'll make him useful in other ways. I shan't have to pay him wages, I shall be paid for keepin' of him, and yet he'll be a sort o' nother servant for me."

When X— rang the bell for someone to conduct his *protégé* to the lower regions, the housekeeper answered the summons in person

instead of by proxy. Her new inmate was introduced to her as Timothy Clement,—Timothy, because Tim rhymes with Limb, and Clement, because this singular specimen of a young Christian Englishman had been captured almost within the shadow of St. Clement Danes,—and he looked so well in his unwonted cleanliness and new clothes that he seemed at once to win her favour. Very likely she set him to knife-cleaning as soon as she got him downstairs, but if she did or if she did not, she was sure to give him a good supper. She did not seem to think that those under her control might possibly not be much fonder of hard work than she was herself, but she did credit them with sympathy in her love of good living, and gave it to them to the best of her ability.

Tim got on pretty well with the house-keeper and her slavey, and began to look less like a wild animal just caught when his patron spoke to him. In the beginning of the next week after that in which he had netted him, X— took Tim to the school he had selected for him, and left him there, with strict injunctions not to loiter in the streets on his way back to dinner.

The boy now for the first time felt painfully the restraints of the civilizing process to which he was being subjected. The alphabet seemed to him a stupid mystery not worth the

trouble of conquering. When the boys made fun of his ignorance, he punched their heads; when the schoolmaster boxed his ears for making a disturbance Tim kicked his shins, and his one old boot having been replaced by two new ones, he inflicted far severer punishment than he received. The schoolmaster then gave him a downright flogging, and when it was over sentenced him to solitary confinement on the dunces' form, on which he stood a sore and sullen little mule, trying to keep in the sobs which shook his tough little frame, and turning into pulp once more, with tears he could not suppress, the page which he was stubbornly determined not to master.

What right had that long chap to pitch into him? Wouldn't he serve him out if he ever caught him outside and there was a brickbat handy, and an archway to throw it from? What business had anyone to keep him shut up there? He hadn't been priggish anything. He could hear the rumbling of the streets, and longed for Arab liberty once more. Good food and clothes and shelter were all very well, but they would be dearly bought if he was to be cooped up in that dull place day after day, with that long chap to drub him worse than ever mammy did.

The school-room door opened. Outside was sunlit frost and the sound of cheerful bustle. Tim made a dash for liberty, capless and with

spelling-book in hand. The schoolmaster darted towards the door to cut him off, but received the spelling-book full in his face. Into the open air rushed Tim, and sped along the pavement far faster than any lamplighter, and after him the schoolmaster, also bare-headed, went full pelt.

But in such a race the schoolmaster was soon nowhere, notwithstanding his superior length of leg. Tim dodged and doubled as long as his pursuer kept his wind, and when he began to pant, darted down a court, where he was lost to view.

About one X— rang his bell and inquired whether Timothy had come back from school.

"No, sir," answered the greasy-lipped little slavey, who had been interrupted in the enjoyment of a favourite meal, and being a kind-hearted lass was sorry that her new companion should not have shared her enjoyment. "No, sir, he ain't come in yet; and misses said she couldn't have the dinner kep' waitin' for nobody, an' so we're a-havin' of it; an' I *told* him it was to be roast beef, an' Yorkshire pudden, an' tatars an Brussels sprouts, an' it 'on't be nigh so nice when the gravy's cold."

When two had come and Tim had not, X— went to the school to make inquiries. Having heard the schoolmaster's sullenly indignant account of Tim's iniquities, X— started for John Rusden's, but he could tell nothing of the boy.

“Mother Brimstone was here last night,” said John. “She flew at my wife, an’ would ha’ scratched her eyes out if I hadn’t a-held her arms. It was as much as I could do to hold her at fust. She bit an’ scratched like a cat, an’ kicked wuss than the Limb. An’ then, when the stren’t’h the drink had giv her was worked off, she laid down on the floor an’ hollered. We’d a crowd round the door. She swore she’d ’ave the lor of us,—fust it was our blood. We’d kidnapped her dear child, an’ she’d give us in charge that wery night, she would. I got tired of her row at last. She’d woke up the little uns, an’ it ain’t pleasant to have a mad-drunk old beggar woman wrigglin’ and screechin’ in your ’ouse, an’ a lot o’ idle folk as might ha’ found summut better to do starin’ in an’ grinnin’. So says I at last, ‘You’ll give us in charge, will ye, mother? Well, then, I’ll go an’ get a pleeceman for you to go and give us in charge to.’ So I put on my hat, but, bless ye, before I could git to the door she was off like a shot. Mother Brimstone don’t like the pollis no more than the devil do holy water.”

XVI.

ORANGES.

A GOOD story might be made out of the adventures of an orange. In some bright sunny garden of the Azores, planted with an undergrowth of lupins and water-melons, the green balls dangling from the dark-leaved, fragrant-blossomed trees grow and golden into constellations, starring a "green night" with lemons and limes, citrons, guavas, and loquats ripening around them. Shrouded in leaves, the "fair Hesperian fruit" is crowded into bulging coffins, buried in a ship's hold, and tossed upon the sea. Knee-breeched porters, trotting in single file, issue from cavernous river-side alleys, bearing the punchy fruit-boxes on their horse-collar like knots; and after lying *perdu* again for a while in mine-like stores in the cramped purlieus of Lower Thames Street, the juicy gold sees the light once more—at Covent Garden, for distribution amongst the middle class and the wealthy—at Duke's Place, to be sold by rich Jews to some of the poorest of London street-sellers, for resale to the mighty army of our strugglers. From the blue sky of the Western Isles, on which it hung embossed, to the foiling blue basket-paper in which the

orange enters some stifling Holborn court, the change is wide and widely suggestive.

That Duke's, or St. James', Place fruit mart I have mentioned is a favourite resort of mine. Its slovenly dinginess, and miry litter, contrast so quaintly with the glow and the gloss of its wares—its Sunday morning bustle with its sabbatical Saturday afternoon calm. The whole place—even to the unglazed shops—is such a squalid bit of Orientalism let into London—Jewish faces, Jewish names, now and then a turban or a robe-like garment; a synagogue looking down upon the market with dim eyes; and round about in husk-strewn narrow lanes, beetle-browed Jewish houses of call, second-hand Hebrew bookshops, and advertisements of Hebrew teachers, and Jewish almanacks, supplied with "C. E." equivalents to the Hebrew dates. Not the least curious of the houses of call is one for Jewish jewellers, at which at times there is a show of gold and gems that, were London suddenly given up by blunder to plunder, would make a loot-lover's eyes sparkle as brightly as itself.

Coming back from market with his basketful of oranges through Mitre Street, I met the little fellow whose history, according to my custom, I am about to give in his own words: a squalidly dressed, stunted touzled-headed urchin, with not much more prominence of nose than that on the monkey-faces at the end of the

shaggy-shelled cocoa-nuts round about ; with a mere slit of a mouth, but with white teeth in it, and a merry smile upon it, which, ugly though he was, made a sunshine in that shady place. He spoke with an Irish accent, but with scarcely anything that was distinctively Irish in his phraseology ; so I will make no attempt to reproduce his brogue by peculiarities of spelling. By-the-bye, it is very seldom that Englishmen do succeed in reporting Irishmen in that way. I have written down what they have said to me, almost hot from their lips, and have thought at the time that I had exactly echoed,—if by a somewhat Irish figure a pen may be said to echo,—their turns of speech ; but have found afterwards that I had fallen into the common error of making Irish people talk, not as they do talk, but as Englishmen somehow fancy they must talk. “Double all your *r*’s, sound every *e* like an *a*, and throw in a good many *Ould Oireland’s*,” seems to be the received canon of English reporting of Irish. It is as faithful for the most part as Scotch or American imitations of Cockneyese.

This is about what the orange-boy told me when I had a chance of getting a chat with him :—

“I was born in London. Mother told me so, and sure she ought to know. No, she wasn’t Irish ; she was English ; anyhow she wasn’t Irish. Father was Irish, and he was a Roman.

Mother was a Protestant. Yes, they're dead, both. I don't know that he wanted us to be brought up Romans. Anyhow, he died, and mother had the bringing of us up. There were four of us then. There's only two now, me and Jenny. That's my little sister that lives with me. My name's Mike. Father came from Ireland, because there was no food there. I don't remember father, but mother's told me about it. The folks ate green things out of the ditches, and lay about the fields like dead cats.

"Father wasn't anything in particular. He did just what he could get. I don't know whether he was good to mother. I never heard that he was worse than other chaps. Of course, mother had to work while father was alive—how was she to keep herself without? Yes, mother was good to us. Me and Jenny hadn't to go out selling when she was alive. The two others did. One of them was run over by a postman's cart, and died at the hospital. That was Pat. Larry was took ill of a fever through sleeping out in the rain. Perhaps they were good boys to mother. I never heard mother say so. They weren't good to me and Jenny. Pat used to whop me, and Larry would have whopped me too, only he couldn't. Oh, I don't bear them no malice. I'd just as soon hear they were in heaven as not. What good would I get by wishing of 'em out? Yes, mother used to tell us something about heaven. I can't

remember exactly what, except that it was a fine place up above the clouds, where there was bands playin' all day long, an' nuffink to pay.

"I don't know if she went to church. No, I know she never read her Bible. How could she when she didn't know how? No, I can't read. Well, yes, I think I should like to. I should like to know what's in the newspapers. There's a chap I know goes out with 'em to the houses of the people that buy 'em, and he'd let me get a read. Besides, it's easy to get hold of a newspaper at the lodging-houses. No, and I can't write neither, but I can make the figures with chalk. I should like to know how to figure well. Chaps say you can't make much money if you don't know that. It would be of more use to me than reading and writing, I expect.

"Yes, me and Jenny used to have games sometimes when we were little uns. Mother used to look us up in her room all day when she went out.

"Oh, yes, she left us a bit of bread, when she'd got it. Our games was at making the chairs fight till they killed themselves, and then burying of 'em under the bed; and we made believe the bolster was a slop, and shied at it round the corner; and jolly games, such as that. Mother couldn't give us smart clothes of a Sunday, but she'd wash Jenny's things

when she'd the chance. There was a priest wanted to get us, because father was Irish. He seemed a kind gentleman. Me and Jenny wanted to go, but mother wouldn't have it. No, she never sent us to a Protestant school, but she said we shouldn't be Romans, and she'd take the poker to the priest if he came after us again. There was no Romans in our court, but lots in the next to it, and there was pretty near always fighting going on, women as well as men.

"Mother didn't use to fight, though she did talk about the poker. That was only to scare the priest. But sometimes she'd get knocked down as she was coming home. Once for ever so long she'd a bump as big as a black egg on her forehead, and another time she'd her ribs broke. What did she do when she come home of a night? Why, she'd give us some food, if we hadn't had none, and then she'd go to bed. What would she do? She didn't care about drink, and she was too tired to go anywhere. Besides, she'd got no money. She used to sell in the streets—oranges and nuts; that's how me and Jenny took to it when mother died.

"When we got a bit older, she didn't keep us locked up at home. We played in the court with the other boys. Oh, we had very jolly games. We used to stop up the gutter till there was a pool, and swim barges, and splash the water at people. Sometimes they'd try to hide

us, but we cut away. If anybody welted Jenny that I could fight, I'd fight him; and if I couldn't I'd shy stones at him; and Jenny used to shy stones if anybody got hold of me.

"Me and Jenny never quarrelled, and we don't mean to. Sometimes mother 'd take us out with her. That's how we came to know how to market. Leastways, I buy for Jenny, and we share. We never went selling till after mother died. She was took ill so that she couldn't go about, and the things were seized for rent, and she had to go into the workhouse, and we didn't see her any more, because she died. Yes, I would have liked to, and so would Jenny. Both of us cried when we heard that mother was dead. I don't know why the neighbours didn't let us go into the house along with mother, but they didn't. They kept us for a bit turn and turn about, and then when mother was dead one of 'em gave us a penny, and another o' em gave us a penny, for stock, and so we started.

"No, we don't feel so very lonesome now. Why should we? Sometimes we go out selling together, and there's plenty of people at the lodging-house when we get back. Yes, we live at lodging-houses—sometimes one, sometimes another. Some of the people are good, some ain't, but not often. And I can take my own part, and Jenny's too. Sure you don't think I'd let her be put upon, and myself stand-

ing by handy? There was a big chap tried to take the herring away she was toasting, and I sent a potful of hot water over him, I did; I was standing by convenient; and the folks wouldn't let him welt me for it, though the missis scolded me for wasting of her boiling water. Me and Jenny always go to market together, but it's me that buys. When we're hard up, and haven't the tin for a half-hundred, I'll get a chap that's bought a lot to sell us a few to work, and mostly they'll do it. Yes, they take their profit. Sure you couldn't expect otherwise; but it ain't nigh so much as they might get if they sold 'em to them that didn't want to sell again. But then again they might have 'em left on their hands, instead of getting rid of 'em certain, right off.

"Yes, I've often heard tell of boiling oranges. There's some that do it, so they say. I can't tell. The folks that buy 'em must be flats, I should say. There's the fruit for 'em to feel. Now and again I've bought specks and sold 'em again at a profit, because, you see, they cost me so little. After all, it's fancy—all that about the look. The jammy ones is just as juicy as the tothers, and every bit as good sometimes, but then folks want to please their eyes as well as their mouths. No, we never worked lemons. Nuts we do, and pretty nigh anything we can buy, according to the season.

"Oh, we sell to anybody that'll buy, any-

where we go—who else is there to sell to? Did I ever think it would be nice to give away anything? I've often wished I could give a chap a punch in the head when I couldn't, because he could have eat me if I'd turned saucy. Oh, in the way of being kind and that, is it? It 'ill be time enough to talk about that when I've got anything to give away, any way. It's as much as me and Jenny can do often to get food, and sometimes we can't do that, and have to sleep anywhere we can, like the sparrows, but not half as snug. If you've got anything to give away, I've no objections. Mind I didn't ask you for anything—mother used to tell us not to beg—but Jenny would be none the worse of a new pair of boots. Them she's got are as full of holes as a colander. Well, no, mine ain't what you may call a new pair, but I ain't asking for myself. Now and again we've had things given us, but not often. Once on a bitter day an old lady called Jenny in, and gave her a warm by her kitchen fire, and a good tuck in, and a pair of cloth boots, for she could hardly walk for the chilblains, poor girl. She hadn't had anything to eat all day before, and she walked into her tea at a good rate, but all the same she was putting by some of the bread-and-butter for me; and when the old lady saw her slipping of it into her frock, and asked her why, and Jenny told her, if she didn't give her a half-quartern loaf for the two

of us; and she asked Jenny where we was lodging, and said that she'd send some one to make inquiries about us. But she never did. I expect she forgot all about us. The frost had broke in the night, and it wasn't nigh so cold the next day. We would have been glad of a sixpence, but I wasn't sorry she didn't send anyone after us. Most like they'd have parted us and cooped us up somewhere, and that wouldn't have suited neither of us. I should like to learn figuring, but I should choke if I was cooped up in a school, and me and Jenny mean to work together always. We're safe not to cheat each other, and one don't grudge the other full share of anything that's going, and that's more than you can say of a good many of them that work together.

"Shan't neither of us marry? There's plenty of time to talk about that, and what's to prevent our working together if we did get spliced? I'd see her man didn't beat her, and she'd keep my gal from cheating of me."

XVII.

WATER CRESS.

HUNDREDS of persons in London live on green-stuff—*Nasturtium officinale*. The statement has a startling look, and yet it is literally true

I do not mean that they eat nothing but watercress, but that if it were not for watercress they would have nothing to eat. Its consumers think of it only as a condiment, but to its itinerant retailers it means food, and everything in the way of subsistence. When I call this fact to mind, I look with respect on the pretty "cresses of the brook" I see flowering white in my country rambles—on the shallow, oblong, artificial cress-ponds to be met with round London, especially in the neighbourhood of the eastern section of the North London Railway. Watercress, speaking generally, is the support of the feeble. As a rule they are very old or very young voices one hears quavering, "Wa-atercrease, wa-atercrease—fine fresh wa-atercreases!"

In fine weather, in spite of the general squalor of the street-retailers, it is rather a pretty sight to see them flocking out of the great watercress market with their verdant basketfuls and armfuls, freshening their purchases under the sun-gilt water of the pump, splitting them up into bunches, and beautifying the same to the best of their ability to tempt purchasers. The fresh green, and even the litter of picked-off wilted leaves, pleasantly remind one of the country, in the midst of our dusty, dingy drab wilderness of brick and mortar; and there is something bird-like in the cress-sellers' cry as one after another raises it.

It cannot compete in music with the Newhaven fish-wives' "Caller ou!" as heard floating about in Edinburgh at dusk, but still there is in it something of the same character.

But in bad weather, on keenly or damply cold mornings, when people who can afford the time snuggle between the blankets as long as possible, making to themselves all kinds of ingenious hygienic excuses for getting up later than usual, and shirking their matutinal "tub," or at any rate "taking the chill off" its cold water to an extent which converts it into warm—on mornings when even those who have fortified themselves with a meal to face the outside air, and are sufficiently clad, hurry along snappish and blue-nosed, or stop to clap their hands across their breasts, and stamp their feet to warm their tingling toes—it is pity-moving to see the cress-sellers crawling to their markets through the raw, glimmeringly-gas-lit gloom. Some have been shivering all night, others feel the cold all the more on account of the fetid heat of the filthily-crowded lodgings from which they have just turned out. How they huddle together like numb, dumb cattle—cluster round any spark of *al fresco* fire—even throng pale patches of the dismal gaslight on the pavement! How covetously they eye the white mugfuls of smoking-hot coffee that are being gulped—the thick slices of bread-and-butter that are being munched! How they

wheelde to make their few halfpence of stock-money go as far as possible—how they beg for ever so little stock, as a loan or gift, when they have no stock-money ! Although, as Herbert sings,

“ Most herbs that grow in brooks are hot and dry,”

what hopelessly toothachy viands do their goods seem on such a morning—what chilblainy work the splitting-up and tying-up ! What a doleful castenet accompaniment the poor creatures’ teeth play to their cry ! I know that it is rubbish to rail at a man for enjoying the wealth which he or his fathers have somehow or other earned—at any rate got—but still when, on such a morning, I think of a self-satisfied, succulent, spotlessly-appointed, well-to-do, middle-aged Englishman coming down, in fur-bound velvet slippers, a staircase kept at an “ equable temperature ” by double windows and warm-air pipes, from a luxurious bedroom and dressing-room to an abundant breakfast, aired newspapers, and toasting boots—and see at the same time a host of half-frozen scarecrows, young and old, scattering to try to get the barest crust by the sale of their green-stuff, I cannot help wishing that the snug gentleman referred to could, just for once in a way, be forced to change lots with a cress-seller—to open his eyes a bit—to teach him a little real human sympathy—to show him that he

is not the marvellously liberal gentleman he fancies himself, simply because he subscribes a few never-missed guineas to well-advertised charities. Perhaps he considers it a duty incumbent upon his respectability to have family prayers. No blame to him—far the opposite—if he even only tries to be sincere, and not a pompous would-be-pious parrot; but if he had had, though but for twenty-four hours, a cress-seller's experience, with what deeper earnest would he utter, "Give us this day our daily bread"!

On a spring Sunday morning, the heat of which would have been almost tropical, had it not been for a tempering east wind, I chanced to find myself in Regent's Park just after the bells of neighbouring churches had finished tolling in to morning service. Grass and leaves were out in virgin green. Enclosed corners blazed with big golden dandelions. White and purple lilac were in almost full blossom. Chestnut-trees, too, were spired with precocious pagodas, and the blossom-buds of the famous hawthorn-trees were bursting. Dusky, heavy-fleeced sheep stood grazing, lay dozing, or moved along lazily upon the wide sunny lawns, and the shadier green sloping banks of the brown canal, in which dogs, big and little, were splashing, swimming, or whining to be pulled out by the ears, or the nape of the neck—glossily-matted masses of

moist misery. Other dogs, amongst them noble black retrievers, and fawn-coloured and brindled black-muzzled mastiffs, were racing hither and thither across the dry warm grass, some in bewildered quest of their masters, whose shrill whistles they heard; others simply to have a scamper, a roll upon their backs, and then a headlong gallop back to their masters. The heat had excited some of the water-fowl also, for instead of gravely paddling about, the livelier ones rose from the water with a splutter, flew about calling one another, and then flopped into the water again with a splash and another "quack—quack—quack."

A rumour was abroad that one of the elephants or a rhinoceros was taking a bath. A little rush was made to the railings of the Zoological Gardens. Little children were perched upon the top of them; small boys shinned up them; small men held on to them. Cabmen stood on the tops of their cabs, water-cart-men on the tops of their watercarts, drivers of waiting wagonettes on the box-seats of their vehicles, and with craning necks peered into the gardens, from which the passer-by, too lazy to cross the road, could hear ever and anon an asthmatic snorting and a ponderous splash, followed by a high-mounting sun-gilt spray. Other sight-seers "on the cheap" peered into the gardens at the turnstiles, wondering how the few neither rich nor rare personages—not

a whit better dressed than themselves—whom they saw wandering about within, got there.

Over the gate of one of those grounds-surrounded Regent's Park villas, which make a country-loving built-in cockney break the tenth commandment—covet his neighbour's nest-like house, and no mistake about it—hung a venerable man of twenty-five—a white-headed, white-stockinged young footman, in full fig, conversing nevertheless, in his Sabbath morning condescension, most affably with a knot of acquaintances in Sunday best, but still in the footman's eyes vulgarian mufti.

An open carriage, drawn by a pair of spanking bays—their assiduously groomed skins gleaming like horse-chestnuts fresh from the husks—drew near, and the venerable young man at once turned and fled towards the house, looking not unlike a startled white rabbit scurrying to shelter, as his head, shirt, and calves glanced through the screening shrubs.

The friends in mufti dispersed more leisurely, and then turned to watch the dashing equipage dart in through the gateway about which they had been clustered. When they resumed their walk, there was pride in their port, as if they too, in some indefinite way, belonged to the aristocracy.

A few carriages, for the most part hired, ground round and round. A few equestrians pounded round on their hack chargers, with

sad countenances, polishing their pantaloons. But most of the people in the park were on foot, or seated on the benches, or lolling on the grass, gazing, meditating, smoking, reading books and newspapers, love-making, or quietly enjoying doing nothing. There was a curious medley of people present—soldiers in gay uniforms; paupers in their snuff-coloured Sunday suits; servant-girls out for a holiday; nursemaids and *patresfamilias* wheeling perambulators; sisters of orders; elder sisters of families; hard-worked mothers, in charge of frolicking little ones; old bachelors moping like herons; young foreigners walking four abreast, and talking and laughing loudly; hearty groups of working men, who met other groups, and saluted one another with such affectionate greetings as “Well, old Mouldy, and how’s yourself?”

But there were scarcely any of those hateful young roughs who do their worst to make places of popular resort in London hideous, as they roll or rush about, shouting out their obscenities and blasphemies and idiotic laughter at the very top of their harsh voices. It was too early for them, I suppose. They are as cowardly as they are unclean, and cannot pluck up courage to annoy until they have still farther muddled their confused faculties with muddy beer, or have dusk to cover their retreat when an attempt is made to make them

pay for their outrages on the commonest decency. When I hear people "high falutin'" about English civilisation, Christianity, fair-play-loving manliness, the shoals of young London roughs rise to my eyes, ring in my ears, and I preserve a non-respectful silence.

The park, on the whole, was sunnily silent. The people in it, if they were keeping their Sabbath in no higher sense, were at any rate harmlessly enjoying a morning of rest.

I had just taken my feet from a bench beneath a hawthorn-tree, and risen to go away, when an old basket-bearing dame, seeing the seat vacant, came up panting and placed herself and her basket upon it.

There was no begging *ad misericordiam* tone in her account of herself as we entered into conversation. Deplorably poor though she manifestly was, in spite of the neatness and the cleanliness which characterised her remnants of raiment, she looked as if she would be offended by a proffer of alms, or a simulated wish to buy watercress unsaleable according to the ordinary laws of supply and demand.

"Good mornin', sir," she said cheerily, when our little chat was over. "It does a lonely old body's heart good to have a decent word spoke to her, when there's nothing to be got out on it."

A week or two afterwards, I noticed that the decent old body cried her green-stuff in

the street in which I lived. Very likely she had cried it there for many a year, but I had not happened to notice her before.

If people far more worthy of notice, according to their own conventional notions, than my poor old watercress-woman, only knew how little they are noticed by their neighbours in this everybody-for-himself London—unless some accident makes their existence interestingly recognisable—perchance there would be a little less self-conceit in the world.

No extravagant outlay of capital was required to enable one to become a regular customer of old Peggy's.

I do not know why I called her Peggy, except because she wore a very faded neckerchief-like plaid shawl, such as those the Welsh milk-women in London wear; and I remembered having seen, when a boy, a Glamorgan-shire old Peggy milking ewes in such a shawl.

Besides her "creases," this old Peggy sold little bunches of worm-like radishes, tiniest poses of wall-flowers and stocks which some benevolent gardener had enabled her to make up out of his refuse, and mittens and patch-work kettle-holders of her own manufacture.

She was always neat, clean, cheery, reticently "independent," and very fond of children, who were very fond of her. She wanted to give her poses to them, instead of selling them.

When my little ones noticed her tired look—

they always swarmed to the front door when they heard her cry—they wanted her to come in “to have something”; but a glass of water for herself and a freshening for her “creases,” was all that even those little wheedlers could prevail upon her to take.

One foggy day in November, however, when she called, she was so faint and chilled that she nearly dropped upon the doorstep. The youngsters then fairly lugged her in, and carrying her off to the kitchen, took possession of her. They could not manage to lift the kettle, but in other respects they “made tea for her all by themselves,” pouring out and carrying to her the tea, making and buttering her toast, and so on. The poor old soul, who had been overcome by hunger, fatigue, and cold, recovered, and, after a time, chirped away as cheerily as ever.

“Yes, dears,” she said, “your papa is right, I am a Welshwoman, and little did I think when I came up to make my fortune in London, before ever you were born, or thought of—or your papa either, almost—that I should ever be as lonely as I am now. But God has been very good to me. I’ve had a good husband, and good children, and I’ve nursed their little children. But they’re all gone now—to heaven, or else beyond the seas. But you see God is so good, He gives me kind friends yet, like you, my sweet pretty pets. I must be

goin' now. I don't know when I shall want to eat anything again, after such a tea as you've given me; but, you see, if I don't sell my creases, I shan't have any stock-money for to-morrow."

The children would fain have cleared out her stock, paying for it "out of their own money-boxes," but this she refused to allow. She would only sell the number of bunches she had been accustomed to leave at the house, and then took her departure. Her cheery face was never seen in our street again.

In the spring, noticing a strange cress-seller there, I asked her if she could tell me what had become of her predecessor.

"Oh, Mrs. Griffiths, you mean," exclaimed the new watercress-woman, when I had described the old dame. "Dead an' buried afore Christmas, pore ole thing. She went to the markit one bitter cold mornin', an' the cold struck to 'er 'eart, an' she jest came 'ome an' died. Not a friend she'd left—lived 'em all hout. I mean as belonged to 'er, for heverybody as knew 'er was well disposed to 'er, pore ole thing. Though she 'adnt a penny in the world to bless 'erself with, she'd do a good turn for anybody."

XVIII.

FROM BILLINGSGATE TO BETHNAL GREEN.

“A FEW small fishes” might seem a sorry feast for a multitude, but what hosts have been fed by the swarming shoals of those individually small fish, the *Clupeidæ*! Amsterdam, according to the Dutch proverb, is “built of herring-bones.” It was the herring, a Dutchman boasts, which enabled his countrymen to throw off the Spanish yoke; and although the Dutch herring fishery is now next to nothing in comparison with its ancient glories, the first herring of the season is still, I believe, considered a royal fish in Holland, whilst in honour of the first draught the Dutch fishmongers decorate their shops with flags, garlands, and dried herrings! There are herrings caught off Iceland, in Norwegian fiords, along whose wildly grand shores the tell-tale telegraph wire now runs—erected mainly to betray the fish’s whereabouts—in the Baltic and the Caspian, the White Sea and the Black Sea, on the coast of Kamtschatka and the coast of Carolina. Our Nova-Scotian colonists have herring galore, and a little time ago I read that on the other side of the world the same fish, or its pilchard cousin, had taken a freakishly

sudden resolve of thronging towards and into Port Philip Bay, in numbers so vast, that captains of Melbourne-bound ships reported having sailed for miles through closely packed shoals, whilst the fish were caught ready for market by the primitively expeditious plan of backing carts to the water's edge, and bucketting the herrings into them in basketfuls.

Who has not heard of the fishery of Yarmouth, and of the four golden herrings (more genuine than that seen by Theocritus' fisherman) which it gave to Charles the Second, in acknowledgment of the visit he had paid it expressly for the encouragement of its staple industry? One of the most exciting scenes I ever witnessed was when, after cantering backwards and forwards for hours over the waters of the Moray Frith in a Buckie boat—which, after dark, ran frequent risk of running into others similarly cruising; the crews of all sleepily eating or drinking, yarning, joking, or smoking, or downright snoring round their fires amidships—I was roused about midnight from the nap into which I was nodding, as I sat beside the steersman, by an excited shout, announcing that the "fleet" of herrings had risen at last. The news seemed to spread with an electric thrill of sympathy through the flotilla of fishing-boats on the look-out for them. Down came masts and canvas with a rattle; the nets were shot as fast as the buoys

could be splashed into the phosphorescent water.

I scarcely ever saw a more beautiful sight than when I woke—or rather, was roused from my sleep on the floor of the boat to see it—in the morning. The sun was just coming up above the horizon, gilding the leaden waters, and the moist back-fins of the so-called “whales” that were cruising about, just giving a glimpse of their hog-backs, and tinging with a rosy-red the grey and white of the circling, screaming sea-birds. The dark net was being hauled in, each length as it came in thickly hung with flashing, flinching, fluttering green, blue, pink, silver, gold.

I never saw sprats the very instant they came fresh from their home, but, very shortly afterwards, I have seen waggon-loads of them grinding along the lanes about Wivenhoe and Fingringhoe, in Essex, and when I saw them sparkling like heaps of polished silver coin fresh from the Mint, though only a weak watery winter sun fell upon them, I could not help wondering that such a wealth of (in two senses) beautiful food should be carting off for conversion into most unfragrant manure. Of course, this might not entail a very large absolute loss of aliment. The sprat would be eaten or drunk ultimately, metamorphosed into a small portion of a loaf of bread, or of a pint of beer, or of a slice of meat, instead of masticated

little fish. In the case of the meat-morphosis, however, the very poor, whose position has not gone up with the general rise in prices amongst the labouring classes—the helpless, shiftless folk who must be poor under all circumstances, since, even in case of a *crise générale*, they would be too weak to get much out of the consequent scramble—would have altogether lost the good the sprats might have been to them. It is about sprats that food for the very poor, a meat that contains its own sauce, as the oyster its own juice, besides the condiment of hunger, that I am going to write; although the sprat is not much the very poor man's friend as it used to be. Formerly sprats were sold for from a halfpenny to a penny a plateful; now they command from a penny to twopence a pound, which is considerably less than a plateful, as that vague measure used to be piled. But first we must go to Billingsgate, to see the poor man's fishmonger buy his sprats.

Billingsgate, according to one account, derives its name from King Belin, who built a castle near the site of the present market, on which, in a brass vessel, his burnt ashes were placed. A mythologist of the modern school would say that the human condition, from the necessities of its nature, owes its name to King Belin to represent by his brass vessel his prudence, and by his burnt ashes the ashes-of-the-frame-

to-burning-destruction-consigning freedom of speech, which still characterise the locality to which he is said to have given his name. It is not now, any more than in days gone by, a Billings-and-cooings-gate—not exactly the place to send any one to who would draw from “the pure well of English undefiled,” but still just the place to send any one to who would learn the richness of our tongue in rancorous and racily humorous abuse.

We shall doubtless hear plenty of Pope’s “shameless Billingsgate,” as on this winter morning, raw with a frost-fog, in which blurred gas-jets are burning, we try to sidle our way down to the damp market-shed through this dead-lock of basket-piled vans, with high-perched drivers (who are frequently asked whether it is cold up there, and, almost invisible in the fog, growl down gruff responsive “chaff”), fishmongers’ lighter four-wheeled and two-wheeled vehicles, pony-carts, donkey-carts, donkey-barrows, hand-barrows, wheel-barrows, basket-bearing men, women, hobbledehoys of both sexes, boys, girls, and little children, and toe-trodden-on and rib-“scrunched” sellers of street wares. With our own toes tingling and sides aching, we (always excepting speed in both cases) zigzag like crackers, double like hares through the serried throngs, at times almost knocked over like ninepins by the projecting loads of heavy-laden burden-bearers, perspiring, panting, but still

with breath enough left to indulge at our expense in language which we are very polite to content ourselves with characterising as rather more than slightly impolite.

Were you ever kept down in the "cabin" of a fishing-boat, in which the malodours of semi-putrid bait, bilge-water, bad spirits and tobacco, stale beer, over-night onions, and sodden woollen garments contended for mastery, whilst shipped seas washed about the dirty littered floor up to your ankles? If you have been, you will have some idea of the comfort of our struggle through Thames Street, sloppy and miry in spite of the frost. The greasy blue guernseys and green cords of some of those we get crowded up against, and who swear at us most lustily for our most involuntary proximity to them, unrefreshingly anoint us with fish-slime, and transfer to us a few of the scales with which they are spangled like harlequins. A great deal of shouting and gesticulating is going on in the gas-lit gloom.

It looks very much like quarrelling, downright fighting, or at the mildest horse-play jesting, as we edge our cork-screw way along the market's crowded aisles, and the net-work of narrow alleys about it; but it is really most business-like buying and selling that is being transacted; hoarse top-coated salesmen trying to get the utmost for their consignments, or their own recently snapped-up bargains; buyers,

the least school-educated amongst them, their wits sharpened by their small amount of capital, by no means the least 'cute in their calculations, determined not to bid a fraction more than they think they can get a fair profit on. It is too foggy to see the traffic on board the plump, sprawling-finned Dutch eel-boats, which look in fine weather as if they had been varnished with treacle—that is, if any of those stolid-stage-smuggler-manned, fore-and-aft-chubby-cheeked craft are this morning lying in the river; but we can see oysters shovelled up like coals from the oyster-boats, and shot from sacks like coals afterwards on shore. We see sackfuls of whelks, brimming over like Benjamin's; heaps of mussels, again coal-like—damped-small-coal-like—shovelled up into corners; a few piles of gritty cockles; hollow-pitted slopes of brown and pink shrimps; little heaving chaoses of live crabs and lobsters, with here and there a loose claw nipping spitefully at vacancy or its neighbours; boiled lobsters glowing through the fog like rowanberries through a Scotch mist; dried fish in brassy-yellow bundles, smoked haddocks in amber-yellow strata; basaltic columns of fish-barrels; fresh herrings, spry; cod, stupid; haddock, sulky; gurnet, convivial; pike, devilish; and salmon, arrayed in silver scale-armour, royal-looking even in death; an array of dimly orange-freckled, brown-backed, white-waist-

coated, Quilpishly-grimacing flat-fish, and avalanches of our silvery sprats making a moon-shine in that (in numerous senses) shady place.

Sprats are so plentiful this morning that, in spite of its inclemency, they sell very cheaply. Buyers of fresh sprats for poor neighbourhoods have to remember that a very raw morning sends the price of coals up immediately and most exorbitantly (although all classes of customers have to complain of extortion somewhere or other in the ingeniously complicated coal trade) for those who have to buy coals for immediate use. Sprats may be exceptionally plentiful, but what will be the good of buying them to retail if the great—that is, the poor—consumers of the sprat, accepted as sprat, have not fuel to cook them with? The poor creatures must be too sharp-set to have even a copper to spend, before they could be brought to make a meal off raw sprats.

But their cheapness has tempted one of the costermongers to invest nearly all his stock-money in them. On the shaft of his laden donkey-trap his boy sits sentry, drinking the coffee and munching the bread-and-butter which his master has brought him out from the coffee-house, inside which he now sits enjoying his own breakfast, and negotiating with his mouth full—a circumstance which muffles, not unpleasantly, the hoarse loudness (as of an angry bull that has got a sore throat through bellow-

ing) of his normal language—for the loan of a barrow for his boy. The costermonger, still mouthfully masticating and maledictory, “emerges” (as half-educated people, anxious to avoid “commonplace phrases,” are very fond of saying) from the coffee-house ere long, and, partly by means of his maledictions, succeeds after a time in extricating his trap from the throng. Having driven to a dingy yard in Curtain Road, in which the barrow he has hired is laid up in ordinary, and transferred to it a portion of his glittering stock, he dispatches his boy with the barrow in one direction, whilst he drives off his cart in another. Crossing Shoreditch, the lad strikes into the Bethnal Green Road, and wheels his barrow up and down the melancholy streets that branch from it on either hand. Fog still chokes them, and although the frost has somewhat nipped nose-offences, as well as the blue noses of the poor shivering wretches who envy the comparatively well-fed and well-clad boy they meet (since he has had a warm, sufficient breakfast, his “cords,” cap, and boots are sound, and he has a comforter twisted round his throat and tucked into the breast of his sleeved waistcoat), still the air there is too normally malodorous with ancient stench constantly recruited by new-born ones, for even the purifying influence of cold to make it endurable by any except lungs “to the manner born.” Greedily the poor creatures glance

at the heaped pile of succulent silver which the lad pushes before him, shouting with a lustiness which proves that *his* lungs, at any rate, have not been weakened by want—

“Sprat! Sprat, oh! Fine fresh sprat! All alive, all alive, oh! Penny a pound! Fine fresh sprat! Sprat! Sprat, oh!”

They pop their heads out of their doors like rabbits—only half-frozen rabbits—from their holes. They look hungrily at the sprats; they make hasty calculations of ways and means, by the simple process of fumbling in the pockets of their thin, skimp, patternless skirts for a stray copper. Ever and anon the barrow is stopped and surrounded by a little ring of lean women, watching the boy’s weighing, for all their leaden eyes, with the keenness of cats about to pounce upon a bird—holding up their broken, chipped, cracked, coarse, white and willow-pattern plates, and yellow basins, their crumpled colanders and battered sink-bowls, their aprons, or the “laps” of their dresses, for their tiny purchases—or trying to coax the coster-lad to throw in a few of the tempting little fish.

“Jest ’alf a dozen—you’ll never miss ’em,” whines one old woman.

“Shouldn’t I?” answers the lad, with a grin; “an’ if I didn’t, wouldn’t the chap as I’m workin’ em for, if I was to give summut over to all as axes for it?”

If he had not eyes, so to speak, all round his

head, and were not also of precociously bullying voice and bellicose deportment, he would not be able to preserve his stock from fraudulent or forcible diminution at the hands of famished youngsters and lads, as big as himself, or bigger, who crowd up to his barrow when he stops to trade. Their purchases completed, the poor bargainers hurry back with their feast, which they at once proceed to cook; those who live in the same house sometimes adopting the "co-operative system of house-keeping" by clubbing for a fire, squatted before which they follow out the cookery-book's injunction that sprats should be "served hot and hot," by hooking them out of the frizzling frying-pan with their fingers. "Fingers were made before forks," says the adage, and hunger drives mankind back to the primitive state to which the saying refers.

On goes the boy, pushing and bawling. A good many of the black houses he passes have the long weaver's casements, and now and then a magnified yellow shuttle can be seen projecting from a door-jamb; but a great many of the silk-weavers who once almost exclusively peopled this neighbourhood have been starved out of it. Here and there, however, in a bare room, there still stands a loom—for the most part silent, since either there is no work, or else the fireless weaver's fingers are too numb to shoot the woof athwart the warp.

The boy stops in front of a ground-floor front room, in which a dirty woman with touzled hair, who seems to have scarcely anything on but a cotton gown, and her four daughters (the youngest has not yet been three years upon this, to her, most doleful earth) are hard at work matchbox-making, at twopence-halfpenny a gross. They look so famished that it seems wonderful they do not devour the paste—which they have to find. One of the little girls comes out with a broken plate.

“Can yer make us a good ‘a’porth?” she asks in a wheedling voice.

For once the coster-lad takes pity, and gives her a good deal more than the market value of her money. The poor little maid rushes back with unwonted brightness in her eyes.

The fish are tilted into the black pan; the miserable spark of fire in the grate is coaxed into a tiny flame with scraps of refuse wood and paper, and, still going on with their work, the match-makers snatch a meal; wiping their fingers, after the Japanese fashion, on bits of paper, which they afterwards put under the pan to feed the fire.

If sprats do, indeed, form a portion of the Lord Mayor’s Feast, what a contrast between their condescendingly amused tasters there, and their ravenous consumers in Bethnal Green!

XIX.

THE ORGAN-MAN.

GREAT musicians, and especially great vocalists, are sometimes growled at even by those who most enjoy their music. At the moment of rapture no price, of course, appears too great to give for the privilege of listening to the seraphic strains; but when admiration has cooled, the temper—say of a struggling professional man, or the like—is apt to warm.

“Isn’t it a shame,” he murmurs to himself, “that that long-haired fellow,” or “that chit of a girl” (as the case may be), “should get more in one night than I make by patiently working away for a year? And for what? For what is in the main a mere physical gift, no more a merit than it is for a man or woman to have a good nose.”

If, however, professional music has magnificent prizes for its pets, on the other hand it puts off the lowest ruck of its votaries with most beggarly wages, or downright dreary blanks.

The musicians of the streets do not seem to be, as a rule, a prosperous race. The lonely woman that “has seen better days,” who suddenly begins to quaver in the dusk in some quiet street of private houses; the skinny

woman with an infant at her breast, and half-a-dozen little ones holding on to her limp skirts, who goes about making a low despondent noise she supposes to be singing; the white-aproned mechanics who slowly patrol the streets, dolorously chanting that they come from Man—chest—er—er—er, and have got no work to do—oo—oo; the trembling hoary-headed patriarch, who howls hymns to the most depressing of psalm-tunes in pious neighbourhoods; these, and sundry such-like, may perhaps make more money than a good many of their pitiers suppose—money which melts in drops of gin—but still they cannot be called the favourites of fortune.

Neither do our foreign street-musicians seem to be, as a class, a lively lot. I am not going to write of them with any maudlin compassion. Some of them, no doubt, are deceived by their *padroni*; and English cowards, big and little, are too fond of persecuting them when the luxury can be indulged in with impunity. But, on the other hand, they are often great nuisances, and impudent to boot, and I am afraid that they are rather indolent.

“Indolent!” I can hear some reader indignantly interject. “Indolent, when they walk all those miles, with those great heavy organs at their backs!”

Well, if they are strong enough to walk “all those miles” so loaded, I cannot help thinking

that, if they had a mind for it, they could get work which would pay them better than their organ-grinding; and it does appear most comically preposterous that we should be expected to give money for the privilege of beholding and listening to a steeple-hatted, blue-coated, thong-sandalled bag-piper, shuffling about with his attendant sprite, a facsimile in miniature, like a lazy bear with its lazier cub. They grin at the copper-dispensing British public while they do it—and well they may! Nevertheless, some of these vagrant *artistes* I should be sorry to miss from London streets. Their costume is, generally, too railway-porter-like to be picturesque, but their faces sometimes shed poetry on our prosaic thoroughfares.

An organ-man, whom for several years I have missed in the North London thoroughfares he used to affect, is a case in point. He went by, even “answered to,” the name of Guy—I suppose because his name was Guido—but he was a Guy many an artist must have been glad to get for a model. His face—unlike those of a good many of his brethren, who look like Whitechapel roughs masquerading as foreign musicians—was typically “Italian:” olive complexion, regular features, clearly cut, and great black “lamping” eyes. It was a study to note in what exact harmony with his white teeth they lighted up when he smiled.

He was very fond of smiling, especially at

children, with whom he ranked A 1 for ever amongst organ-men. He let the little street-children turn his handle, and would play out a tune in what had proved a hopelessly unremunerative locality, rather than bring their dance upon the pavement to an abrupt conclusion. When he saw that more paying little patrons were especially pleased with his music or his monkey, he would go on playing long after he had ground out their coppers' worth. The red-jacketed, blue-breeched monkey, which used to descend areas to beg for nuts, and then ascend gate-piers to crack them, lifted his tasselled black velvet cap with great politeness, before he obeyed his master's tug at his chain, and leaped upon the organ, or Guy's shoulder, to take his departure. But what was his valedictory grace in comparison with his owner's? *Lector benevole*, I would parenthetically inquire, didst thou ever recreate thyself by noting the modes in which thy countrymen, sufficiently civilised to consider it incumbent upon them to perform the operation after some fashion, take off their hats? Such observation is a favourite amusement of mine as I moon along the streets. There are, of course, shades of difference, *nuances* of style, too numerous to be indicated in a parenthesis, but English hat-lifters may be broadly divided into the Bashful and the Blatant.

The Bashful hat-lifter considers the process a bore, and one, moreover, that makes him look

a fool. He therefore shirks it as often as he can, letting his eyes look right on, and his eyelids straight before him, that he may not behold a feminine acquaintance; but if by chance he has blundered on one, or has had his attention called to her by his plaguesomely courteous wife, he raises his hand as reluctantly as if he had the rheumatism, and touches rather than lifts his hat, trying to look all the while as if he were only pinching the brim to straighten it.

The Blatant hat-lifter, on the other hand, is so fond of the operation that he goes out of his way to find opportunities for its exercise. Every minute up flies his hat about half a yard above his head, and then down it comes again with a kind of inverted valve-and-piston action.

In both cases the spine continues as stiff as a ramrod, and the face as expressive as a Dutch doll's.

There is a small sub-class—that of the hobble-dehoys who have just taken to hat-lifting, and who are so proud of the performance that they blandly lift their hats to one another.

But whenever an English hand raises a hat, the inflexibility of back, the woodenness of countenance of which I have spoken instantly betray the nationality of the raiser.

In what a different way did Guido lift his hat, his lithe body swaying like a wind-bent willow, in spite of his clumsy clothes, and his mobile face mysteriously taking in at the same time the

occupants of the upper and lower windows of the house to which he was bidding an *au revoir* farewell.

Guy, besides being a pattern of courtesy, had a good deal of fun and feeling, too, in him. I will report, as well as I can, a few of his experiences.

“Yes, sare, my organ vant to please. So she play tune to please her customer. Like your butcher, He say, ‘buy, buy, buy—vat you buy?’ If you no like bif, you can have mouton; and if you no like mouton, you can have de veau or de pork, and moosh of more—I know not. I do not eat de bif and de mouton. Dey cost too moosh. No, nor I do not drink de bière. I am not Anglishman, me Italian. I drink vater, and vat de rude Anglish people call de mess. No, I do not intend I drink de mess, I eat her. I vould drink vine of my contree, but vere is he? He vood cost too moosh. But my organ. She play many tune for many people. ‘Pop go de Veasel,’ and de ‘Old Undredt.’ Yes, she have more psalm-tune, and dey come close togeder. I vill tell you vy. I go trough place vere de people dat love de psalm-tune live close togeder. If I play ‘Pop go de Veasel’ dere, no pen-nee. So I no play ‘Pop go de Veasel’ dere, but de psalm-tune. Who are dey? I know not. Dey love de psalm-tune. Dere is so many kind of religion in Lon-don. I know not, sare, I tell

you. It cost me good bit to get my tune proper. De fresh tune cost moosh. But now she is proper. I know de people I go rond, and my organ play to please her customer. Vat you call, sare, a fun-nee fellow, a doctor, dat alvay give me pen-nee ven he is at home—he come out on de step of his shop to give me de pen-nee—he say to me, ‘Ah, you have feel deir pulse.’ He like not de people dat love de psalm-tune. Dey no vant him, so he no like dem. But he alvay give me de pen-nee. He is vat you call a fun-nee fellow, sare. He vant to give me a drink. I shake my head, but he vant still and say, ‘Not out of my bottell.’ But I shake my head again. Den he say, ‘My lamp scare you like de railway.’ Vat he mean? You tell me, sare? He have de red lamp, and his nose is red—yes, ver moosh. He is fun-nee fellow, and alvay give me de pen-nee ven he is at home. Von day he not at home. I play, and a yong shentleman come out and fling about his arm. I tink he ver moosh pleased. I go on playing, but the yong shentleman run away and fetch de pelisseman. He give me shove, so I say, ‘Vat for?’ Den he take hold of me, and pinch my arm, and say to de yong shentleman, ‘Come,’ and ve begin to walk. De pelisseman pinch me ver hard, dough I say noting; but I vonder, sare, at your con-tree. But I meet de doctor, and he speak to de pelisseman, and he scold the yong shentle-

man, and de doctor scold de yong shentleman, and give me seeseepen-nee. So I go, and am glad de yong shentleman run away for de pelisseman, dough he pinch me—yes, ver moosh. I like to knock him down vid my stick, but me stranger; I must mind de law. My monkey no mind de law. He bite de pelisseman; but den I not have de monkey. De people, sare, in your contree ver different. Some vill give de pen-nee and tell me go on; and some vill give de pen-nee and tell me go away queek; and some vill not give de pen-nee, but run for de pelisseman. Me stranger; how know I? No, sare, *you* not tell me go away, and de beautiful signora send me de pen-nee by de servante, and de beautiful signorina; and ven she fling him out, she wrap him in papier. No, sare, dat not make him buy more at de cook-shop; but sometime dey fling him at your head, like de brick, or de shell of oyster, and he tomble in de mud. I prefair, me, de pen-nee in de papier. Sometime you not find de pen-nee ven he tomble in de mud. Sometime de yong tief run away vid him.

“My monkey I have—I vill conseeder—yes, I have him tree year. I have him of a Frenchman dat die at de house vere I lodge—yes, sare, at Saffron Hill. Vat *you* know, sare, of Saffron Hill? Yes, sare, many Italian dere. Sometime de Anglish afflict us, and we fight. Yes, sare, sometime de Italian use his knife. De Anglish

fight vid de fist, and de Italian fight vid de knife ven he not let alone. Ve never say noting against de Anglish if dey not trouble; and sometime de Anglish and de Irish fight vid de knife also. De Italian vat you call ver respectable. De Anglish and de Irish not at all respectable on Saffron Hill. Oh, yes, sare, some ver respectable, but not our afflicter. Beeg blackguard. My monkey's name Napoleon. De Franchman no like Napoleon den. Me, I hate him. But de monkey have de name, and he stick like de mud. My monkey is good Napoleon; de oder is bad—yes, ver bad, dough you Anglish praytand dat you like him. Ve oder say dat you are afraid, so you smoot him like de tiger. No, sare, *I* do not say de Anglish are afraid. I love de Anglish—some Anglish; yes ver moosh. I tell you vat say my contreemen. I love my Napoleon. No, sare, I not sell him, not for his veight in gold. I tink I die, Napoleon tink I die also, and he sit on my bed and cry. He bite my ear, he pull my nose, but I not stir; me too veak. Den Napoleon cry, like de beautiful signorina if she tink you die, sare. Ve in de contree den, in Essex, at vat you call—I forget her name—Bain—Bain—Bain—ah, yes—no, no—Berraintree, vere dere is factory. I play to de gal ven dey come out, and dey give me pen-nee and dance; but dey rob me at de house vere I lodge—not de people of de house,

but de man dat sleep vid me. I vake in de morning—he gone, and all my mownee gone also. Some of de lodger laugh, but some say dey drub him ven dey catch him; but vat good *dat* do me, if I no get my mownee? I get more mownee, but not moosh. Den I take ill, and dey say dey must turn me out—I no pay for my bed; but a yong voman pay for my bed, and de people of de house give me something to eat—not moosh; I not vant moosh. Dey tink I die, and I also, and Napoleon cry. He get into my bed, and put his arm rond my neck, and cuddle like de little shild. Dey try to sell my monkey—not for demself: for me—but Napoleon vill not go. He bite de man dat vant him, dough he feed him ver kind. Ven I get vel, he give me treepen-nee to start. He give Napoleon bit of black-boudin, but Napoleon not like the black-boudin, and fling him in his face, and de man laugh, and say Napoleon vill come to starve if he turn up his nose at good viande, and fling her about dat vay. But Napoleon not come to starve yet. De leetle signorina give him plenty food for tree veek ven she see him. De signorina ver fond of Napoleon, and Napoleon ver fond of de signorina.

“To promenade in de contree is ver nice ven it make fine. All look so clean after Lon-don. No, not vere ve lodge—dat like Lon-don; but de house and de street, and de tree, and de hedge.

But de tree and de hedge give no pen-nee. Sometime I go to de fair. De fair is ver fun-nee, and I get plenty pen-nee ven I have de organ vid de doll and dey dance, and Napoleon dance, and de contree people dance and laugh like de bull. But von time dey get tipsee, and knock me down, and break my organ; and now I have no more de doll, I not go to the contree. Nobody pay me for my organ, and I not like de broken head. Dey tink dat ver fun-nee, but me, I not tink dat fun-nee. Dere vas von pelisseman, but he do noting but laugh. If de contree people knock *him* down, he not tink it so fun-nee. De pelisseman afraid; dat vy he laugh. Ven de contree people got no bière, dey is stupid as ship; but ven dey is dronk, dey like de vild bullock.

“Now ve stay in Lon-don. Yes, I am vell known in dese part, and Napoleon also. Ve go long vay—dis vay dis day, and oder vay oder day—every day except Sunday. Den ve go to our church vonce—no, no, sare; not Napoleon; dat is ver fun-nee—and de rest of de day ve eat and lie on our bed. Ve valk ver far, and so ve tired, and de sleep is good. Ven I hear de bell ring on de Sunday, I am glad because den I can sleep more. Ven it make fine, and I get de pen-nee, I no mind de long valk; but ven it rain and snow, and blow cold, and I get no pen-nee, den it is different, and Napoleon shiver and climb into my coat. He

is not fun-nee ven it is cold, and you have moosh of cold in England—yes, sare, ver moosh.”

One very cold day we missed Guy when he was due. Another of his days came, and another, but he came not, and soon his round was appropriated by a countryman as coarse and crusty as Guido was finely cut and courteous. We had given up all hope of ever seeing our favourite organ-man again; but one day in early spring he reappeared, looking very, very ill. The bones of his cheeks and hands had a ghastly prominence; his clothes hung loose as bags on his once well filled-out frame.

He had just been released from the sick-bed on which he had lain all the winter, and carried a little document, drawn up by his priest, soliciting contributions from his old patrons to enable him to return to his native country, as the only chance of saving his life.

He was quite broken down. He fairly cried when he told us that Napoleon had died during his illness. At any rate, his friend had disappeared, and he had been told that he was dead.

Guy was no longer “ver fun-nee,” but he tried to smile as beamingly as ever on his little friend the “signorina,” who was shocked to see him so white and wasted, and made a pathetic failure of the attempt.

“Addio,” he said, lifting his hat with a

melancholy ghost of his old grace ; and since then I have never seen his face.

XX.

A PAIR OF MUDLARKS.

THE river no longer lapped against the lower stairs ; the raised stone causeway, that sloped from their foot to the water, rose bare above the pebbly hard, and green-brown mud. One wherry had been dragged down to the foot of the causeway, in readiness for almost despaired-of passengers ; half-a-dozen others were huddled high and dry at the foot of the stairs ; another lay, bottom upwards, at the top. By it stood an old waterman, in a glazed round hat, sleeved brass-buttoned waistcoat, and brown pair of breeches patched in places with canvas. Occasionally he removed his hands from his pockets, in order to take his pipe from his mouth and adjust the tobacco. On these occasions he growled down a word or two to another smoking ancient mariner, attired in a chapped sou'-wester, a faded comforter, a pea-jacket with only two of its big horn-buttons on it, and a pair of blue breeches patched with green cloth at the knees, who sat upon the gunwale of one of the boats, kicking his heels against its side. When ad-

dressed, the second waterman, without taking his pipe from his mouth, growled a few words in reply, and then went on kicking his heels; whilst the first, having replaced his pipe, began again to stamp his feet in a "Bruin-dance" to warm his numb toes—for a biting north-east wind, threatening frost, was blowing across the river. "L'Âge d'or, qu'une aveugle tradition a placé jusqu'ici dans le passé," says St. Simon, "est devant nous;" but London watermen are no St. Simonians. The old fellows were lamenting their lost golden age, when watermen took more in a day than now they earn in a fortnight. "Might jist as well be a mudlark," growled one old boy.

"Poor beggars!" answered his comrade, with a mingled contempt and pity in his tone which showed that he thought that, after all, watermen had not sunk quite so low as that. Some baker's dozen of mudlarks could be seen from the stairs: an old man dressed in what seemed to have been once a woman's caped cloak, the black stripes and the green ground of the pattern equally almost obliterated by grease; an old woman with a nut-cracker nose and chin, which almost dipped into the filthy slush into which she peered, and dirty flesh as well as a scrap or two of dirty linen showing through the slashes of her burst gown, over which, for "warmth's sake," she wore a tippet of ragged sack-cloth; and a flock of frowsy, touzled-headed youngsters

—a good many with no covering to the touzled heads—of every variety of grimy tatteredness: some with their petticoats kilted or their trousers tucked up mid-thigh high, but most with petticoats and trousers which saved their owners trouble in that way, through being normally abbreviated to the regulation wading-measure. With their bags and their baskets—both, but for scraps of miscellaneous material put in loose to stop the leaks, very much like Danaïdian buckets—with their old hats, and kettles, and pots and pans—the mudlarks, young and old, groped backwards and forwards along the hard, which plum-pudding-stoned their bare feet with little pebbles, paddled in the chilly slush, or splashed like shrimpers in the margin of the water.

Everything almost seemed fish that came to their very miserable nets. If any one wants to know the value of seeming rubbish, the straits to which people are put sometimes to procure a subsistence in this vast “London”—whose very vastness, however, through the multitude of paltry waifs which it furnishes, enables a little army of human strays to live after a fashion: a miserable fashion, but nowhere else could such a multitude of such people live in any fashion—let him take his seat in one of those queer beer-and-tobacco-scented, many-angled, notched-tabled rooms of public-houses, often weather-boarded, whose backs give on the river,

and watch mudlarks at work. They pounce upon little knobs of coal as if they were "real Whitby jet" brooches; lovingly coil up limp lengths of sodden rope that look like drowned, putrefying snakes; wrangle over broken bones which starving dogs would relinquish to one another without a snarl; make prize of bits of wood which seem about as valuable; exult over a rusty iron bolt or lock, and can scarce believe their delighted eyes when their grubby hands have fished up half a dozen verdigrised copper nails.

Watch the poor creatures clustering about that heeled-over schooner, out of which coal is being whipped; see them clambering up the stranded black-coal lighters, which, though "empty," may still hold coal that will be worth their taking; feeling in the muddy channel meandering in front of the shipwrights' closed dock, and reproachfully eyeing the shut gates which bar them out from precious spoil; creeping as near as the indignantly barking dogs on board will permit, to the high-piled hay-and-straw and other craft beached stern on in ranks upon the hards, lying broadside and lobside beneath the dangling crane-chains of many-floored warehouses and mills, flush with the water when the tide is in, or jammed into dark clefts between those towering piles. And what do the poor creatures get for their dismal groping in all weathers? If a mudlark clears six-

pence in a day, he thinks himself a most lucky mudlark—often he gets far less than that—sometimes he gets nothing.

The incoming tide gradually drives the mudlarks ashore. They tramp in file up the stairs, printing fresh muddy footprints on the stones, and sprinkling them with unfragrant drippings from their drenched garments.

"What luck, old gal?" asks a waterman of the nut-cracker-visaged old woman.

"Same 's ever," she answers at once, without looking round, in a tone almost too sleepy to be peevish.

Her bag looks full, but if her luck to-day has only been her usual fortune, the bulky find under which she bends cannot be very valuable—if one may judge by her appearance.

She slinks off to her lair, followed by an imp bearing a rusty crumpled colander, piled with its find. Its sex is indistinguishable. It has long mud-hued hair hanging down in a mat over its shoulders. Through the hair one gets a glimpse of a never-washed little face, whose only sign of intelligence is an occasional glance of wicked knowingness. The imp is clad in a corduroy waistcoat, sleeved like the round-hatted old waterman's; the sleeves are turned back at the wrists, to enable the grubby little hands at the end of stick-like little arms to find their way out. What other clothes, if any, the imp has on, it is impossible to say, since

the waistcoat comes down to its kibed little heels—bare of everything except ingrained dirt, thickly lacquered with a fresh layer of malodorous slime—like the Ulster great-coats in which men make Noah's-ark guys of themselves now-a-days; and though some of the bone buttons are off, the capacious overlapping double breast quite hides the no doubt skinny little frame within.

"Poor ole Sue!" said the round-hatted old waterman; "an' yet she worn't a bad-looking young 'ooman once upon a time."

"Well, *you* ain't a chicken, but that must ha' been long afore your time, Sam," interjected a younger comrade who had joined Sam on the stairs-head.

"No, 'tain't," answered Sam. "I don't mean as I can remember her so 's to 've kep' company wi' 'er, or the like o' that; but when I was about 'alf way through my 'prenticeship, she come to live 'ere. She were fresh from the country, jist married, an' an unkimmon pretty young wifc she were, though she do look a deal more like a guy now, or a Punch-and-Judy show."

"Boat, sir—boat?" the waterman had greeted me with, when I first made my appearance on the stairs, and they had naturally looked rather glumpy when they found that I did not want one, especially since they could not make out what I *did* want—except to stare at the river,

and perhaps listen to them. The round-hatted old fellow answered me civilly enough however when, interested by what he had said, I tried to get into conversation with him.

“About ole Sue? Oh, yes, I can tell ye all I know about her, sir, if you want to know it, but I can do talkin’ as well walkin’ as standin’. I was jist thinkin’ o’ goin’ ’ome to git a bit of a warm, for it’s no good waitin’ about ’ere any longer sich a day as this.”

I proposed that, instead of going home for his “warm,” he should have a drop of hot spiced beer in the river-side room from which I had recently issued.

He accepted my invitation nothing loth, and thus discoursed over his steaming pewter:—

“As I was a-sayin’, sir, I remember poor old Sue when she was fust married. From the country she come. The chap she was married to was a ship’s butcher, leastways, the son o’ one, and went down into the country to look arter beasts an’ so on, an’ that’s ’ow he fell in wi’ ’er. There was a good many young chaps envied him his luck when they saw the wife he’d got, but there was never a word said agin ’er—not that way. They was like a pair o’ turtle-doves or two young pigeons, as the Scrip-tur’ says, when they was fust married, and a nice little family they ’ad—most on ’em gals, as took arter their mother in their looks. The young chap went pardners wi’ his father, an’

they was goin' ahead like steam, when all of a suddint they blew up, jist like one o' them precious kittles that's sp'ilt our trade. The ole feller never 'eld his 'ead hup agin. The young chap 'ired hisself as journeyman to another butcher, but he'd 'ad one for 'isself too. To keep his s'perrits up he took to drinkin', an' beat his wife an' starved his children. At last he went downright to the bad—ran away an' was never heerd on arterwards; an' nobody missed him, 'cept 'twas Sue. His youngsters had got to 'ate him, an' make game on him when he were too far gone to drub 'em; but she'd stuck to him through all, an' kep' fond on him, some'ow, for all his drubbin's. They're queer cattle, is women. There's my ole 'ooman, now, as I never laid a finger on, or crossed 'er—not to speak on—in a single thing she wished; an' yet she hain't 'alf the respec' for me as them as has cotched Tartars has for them. She wouldn't order me about as she do, if I'd given 'er every now and then a jolly good beatin'.

“ ‘A 'ooman, a dog, and a walnut-tree,
The more you hit 'em, the better they be.’

“I don't 'old, though, with them as is for ever thrashin' their missises. They gits used to it, and so it loses its effec'—but now and again it's as well to let a 'ooman feel the weight o' your 'and, jist to show 'er who's master.”

I quoted the well-known sentiment, “The man who lays,” etc.

"Oh, yes," continued the old man, at first in a tone of contemptuous offendedness, "I've heerd the sailor chap a-spoutin' that at the theaytur. That's all very well in a play, but sailors is as free wi' their fists as other folks when a 'ooman riles 'em, an' if you was to know 'ow haggerawatin' our wives sometimes is—I don't know 'ow 't may be wi' ladies—you'd wonder they didn't git wolloped horfener than they does. It's all very fine to talk about not layin' yer 'and on a 'ooman, but what are you to do, if you can't keep the 'ooman from layin' of 'er 'ands on you? But I was a-talkin' about Sue, poor ole gal. There she were left wi' all them bairns to look arter, an' 'ard she tried. Work her fingers off, she would, but as they growed hup they was no comfort to 'er. She'd no time to look arter 'em, you see, when she was a-slavin' at the wash-tub. They run about the streets, an' did as they liked. There was on'y two boys. One on 'em went to sea, an' we never heerd no more on him. I don't know what become o' t'other. There was 'alf a dozen gals or so. None on 'em come to no good. Some on 'em married, an' some on 'em didn't, but there worn't much to choose betwixt 'em. 'Tain't to be wondered at that Sue got to be a bit too fond o' drink, when she could git it, poor ole girl. You see, they give it 'er at the 'ouses where she went washin' an' sich, an' so she got to know the comfort on it. Folks

said as she drank when she was fust married, but it's my belief as 'twas all a fib. It was the women as said it, as was envious of the colour she 'ad. A fine 'igh colour it were, but not a bit more like drinkin' nor a rose is like a radish. She were fair druv to drinking, was poor ole Sue, by her 'ard life, an' then the wery folks as 'ad give her the gin at their 'ouses wouldn't give her no more work. She couldn't git no more washin', nor charin', nor nuffink. Down she sunk, poor ole gal, till she come to mudlarkin', and that she've been starvin' at this ten year. 'Ow she 'olds hout's a myst'ry to me—a frost'll finish her hoff some night, I expec'—but she must ha' 'ad a rare constitooshun to stand all she's stood—sorrer, an' slavin', an' drinkin', an' starvin'. A gran' thing is a fine constitoo-shun, sir; but them as has got 'em is mostly fools—they takes liberties with theirselves. If they didn't, it's my belief as they'd live pretty nigh for ever, if they didn't git drowned, or killed by axedint some'ow.

“Oh, that young limb,” my informant proceeded, when I asked about the old woman's young companion. “That's poor ole Sue's youngest daughter's youngest. A reg'lar character *he* is, the owdacious young toad! I guess he's forgotten more wickedness than you ever knowed, sir. *He* 'on't be a mudlark long arter poor old Sue's gone. A thief, an' wuss, that's what *he'll* be. He's tried his 'and at it a'ready,

the sarcy young rascal! Poor old Sue might be comfortabler if she'd let him steal, but that she won't, an' the on'y good thing about the young scamp is that he minds his granny.

"If you'd like to see where the ole 'ooman lives, there it is," said my waterman, pointing up the lane, when we were parting at the door of the hostelry.

What he pointed at was the dilapidated, pigsty-like, built-out back-kitchen of a tumble-down house, which could find no paying tenants even in that densely-populated neighbourhood, and had been appropriated accordingly by squatters.

"An' if the ole 'ooman's in as you go by, an' you've a shillin' to spare, you might do wuss than if you give it to her, sir," the old man, who had grown sentimental over his spiced beer, remarked in conclusion. "She were a very fine young 'ooman once upon a time."

XXI.

"THE WUSS'ALF OF A PAIR O' SCISSORS."

"AND ever, as he slowly cleaves the air," writes Herr Teufelsdröckh of the old-clothesman, "sounds forth his deep fateful note, as if through a trumpet he were proclaiming,

'Ghosts of life, come to judgment!'" I used to be reminded of that description by the gloomy "Any humberrellers to mend?" of an old man I occasionally came across some months back; or rather his cry was more like the "Bring out your dead!" of the Great Plague time.

The poor old fellow had really the most despairingly dreary voice I ever heard. On week-days he went about with his old wife mending umbrellas and recaning chairs. On Sunday afternoons, during the season, I have heard him croaking, in lonely lugubriousness, "Straw-er-ber-ries! fine straw-er-ber-ries! Hautboys! Fine straw-er-ber-ries!" I wonder that his dismal drawl did not scare off customers. I know it always gave me the fancy that his fruit must have fattened upon graves, and would taste like weeping clay-clods rather than the summer dainty. There was an utter incongruity between my poor old umbrella-mender and his blushing, sweet-juiced, summer Sunday wares. The dull medlar would have been in far better keeping.

Both he and his wife were "miserably poor"—a lean, pale couple, whose life seemed as thin, washed-out, and dingy as their clothes. The only thing bright about them was the mutual love which had lived on through long years of common care and want—of the sordid kind, which is too apt to make the linked

sufferers snappishly selfish, instead of knitting their hearts more closely together. It was pretty to see the way in which they literally bore one another's burdens; and each strove to secure for the other the least draughty place, when they sat out on the pavement in the cold wind, plying their craft. The last time I saw the old man was on a Bank Holiday.

Holiday-makers were flocking out of the City, on foot, on horseback, on velocipedes, and in vehicles of all kinds. Almost all were in what the Scotch call a "raised" state from animal or alcoholic spirits. One old dame had succumbed very early in the day to an excess of the latter, and sat on the ground at a corner, smiling with blank blandness at a crowd of grinning small boys, ever and anon dispersed.

Two constables, who had just been sent for to aid in conveying her to the station-house, came down the hill, snarling at one another like coupled hounds, and closely followed by a kite-tail of mannikins in billycock hats, intensely enjoying their wrangle.

The London policeman is always least amiable on a public holiday, and no wonder. It may be sport to others, but it means extra bother to him.

No more force than was necessary was used in lifting the old woman from the ground; but, of course, the on-looking crowd yah-yahed and

shouted “Shame!” One of the most energetic shouters was my normally depressed old umbrella-mender. When he had relieved his feelings he once more shut himself up, so to speak, and trudged on as if there were no object left him in the world—as if it did not matter whether he turned to the right or to the left, went on, turned back, or stood stock-still. Out of curiosity I followed him.

Death and disease keep no bank or any other holidays; their work is never done. Through the crowd of merry-makers a hearse and a string of mourning coaches slowly threaded their way, the white and black of the attendants' trappings showing that some child or young person was being borne upon this general holiday to enduring rest (why do we dress up men like magpies to express our grief in such a case?). And two depressed paupers were plodding along with one of those inexpressibly depressing hand-ambulances—wheeled coffins, whose every creak says, “*Memento mori*, and be quick about it”—in which poor people are carried to small-pox and fever hospitals.

Walking like something galvanized, the old man dragged his legs on into the City, thronged with Londoners hurrying to railway stations, and with country folk come up to see the sights of “the great metropolis”—joskins no longer distinguishable as formerly by rusticity

of attire and gullibility of temperament, but by caricature of fashionable costume, and an obstinate determination not to believe *anything* told them by a cockney. Tobacconists', confectioners', American drink shops, public-houses, proffering iced claret-cup, brandy-and-seltzer, brandy-and-soda, lemonade-and-sherry, and so on, were open; street-sellers hawked little sheaves of lavender in blossom, withering roses pillowed on faded moss, riding-switches, umbrellas (some, perhaps, of the old man's mending), "penny guards for sovereign hats," plums, pineapples, cocoa-nuts, panoramic views, cigar-lights; and little boys and girls, outside the main thoroughfares, persistently stuck to passers-by, holding out oyster-shells in their grubby paws, and whining, "Please to remember the grotter—on'y once a 'ear, sir." They did not appeal to the old umbrella-mender. On he drifted, with eyes which had no speculation in them, through the holiday traffic, which gave the City streets a very different aspect from the look they wear either on Sunday or on an ordinary week-day. A wagon, high-piled with wool-bales, a dray grinding past with jangling iron rods, were objects that attracted attention.

A good many people seemed to have selected the day for their family flitting to the seaside. Cabs swayed beneath pyramids of luggage, and the old man was nearly run over by a private

omnibus, crammed inside with olive-branches and nursemaids, and crowned with boxes, a bassinette, and a perambulator. He was tossed like a chip on the flood of life that poured past the metal-shuttered insurance-offices and banks in Moorgate-street and Princes-street, and Mammon's sealed sepulchre, the silent Bank. The clock of St. Margaret's protruded over what was almost a solitude, and the old man turned into Lothbury—I suppose, to be out of the bustle. When he stopped for a minute at the mouth of hushed Tokenhouse-yard, I could have fancied him one of Defoe's people flitting about, half demented through scare, in the plague-stricken city. Throgmorton-street was noiseless as a dry watercourse; a footfall could be heard in Bartholomew-lane, and Capel-court was like a catacomb. A few telegraph-boys hopping about like sparrows, and a little girl knocking half-hopelessly at the door of a shuttered shop, were the only persons besides the old man and myself in Threadneedle-street, and asphalted Broad-street slanted off like a lonely frozen river. No medalled, bushy-bearded commissionaires, with empty sleeves, stood waiting on the Exchange flags. Good Mr. Peabody, left all to himself, did not appear to relish his *sedet æternumque sedebit* post—looked as if he would like to put on a hat, and get up and seek some company. Her Majesty, seen through the bars of the Exchange gates,

seemed to be presiding over a muster of voiceless, invisible ghost-merchants. If the Exchange had been open, it would have been just the place for my poor old man to spend his Bank Holiday in, in company with the seedy, sad, weary people who mope upon the seats of the arcades for hours, silent and inscrutable. On he mooned through the warren of courts and alleys which lie between Cornhill and Lombard-street. He might have murdered me there, or I him, in broad daylight, without witnesses.

An old gentleman, posting letters at the Lombard-street office, started when he heard our footsteps—

“Like a guilty thing surprised.”

There was life again in King William-street; the Monument cage was black with visitors—huddled and restless as caged rats; musty and mouldy tramps, looking quite contented with their misery, snuggled and snored as usual in the recesses on London Bridge; trains thundered across the railway bridges; but the river had a strangely restful look, and leaning his arms on the parapet, the old man stopped to rest. Some of the steamers alongside the wharfs were gently smoking, like simmering kettles, but there was no hubbub on deck or quay. On one lonely wharf I saw a little girl, in yellow seaside costume, trundling about a sack-barrow. Crowded river-steamers, flying

the red ensign, churned their way past a little fleet of deserted straw-barges, but no black lighters lumbered sideways up-stream, like wounded whales.

The old man went down the steps into Lower Thames-street, perennially perfumed with a stale fishy and fruity odour. Here a little waterside work was still going on. Out of a dark alley a line of porters, with diamond-branded oblong deal boxes on their backs, trotted across the road into Botolph-lane, whence descended a return gang of porters who had discharged their loads; looking, with their knots still on their flushed brows, like clowns weary of grinning through horse-collars. In moist Billingsgate, though the fish-shops were closed, a few stall-sellers were vaunting the excellence of their shrimps, but costermongers snored tranquilly in their barrows outside; and the smeared Coal Exchange opposite—which surely ought to have been built of Galway marble rather than white stone—looked as if it might have had any number of the newspapers' "torpid toads" shut up in it for generations. The greasily-dingy swing doors of the Custom House, with their "in" and "out" friction-polished brasses, were openable, but no swingers seemed to be going out or in. A sergeant in the Guards went by, escorting his little girl, in her clean summer Sunday best, to see, with other holiday-makers, the

wonders of the fortress of which, no doubt, the little maid believed him to be the chief guardian. It was pleasant to see how proudly she hung upon his hand, how proudly he looked down on her, and how heartily the fatherly, smiling comrades, with whom he stopped to talk, spoke to both.

It never rains but it pours. Just afterwards the drearily-lonely old man, wandering like a cloud, passed another proud military sire—an artilleryman in uniform, carrying his baby in its christening cloak; the old women he met grinning grandmotherly approval. "He's *proud* to do it," said one beaming old lady. "But just see what a touzlin' the dear man is a-givin' the pore little dear," cried another. On went the old umbrella-mender, heeding nothing, past the closing great gates of a dock and railway depôt; a squat, dingy tenement, by bill announcing that it "wanted hands for poor work!"—with sewing-machines within click-clicking in dreary incessancy; sugar-works, exhaling a nauseous, warm, half-treacly, half-sanguineous scent; and a cork manufactory, with a man, sulky at having to work on Bank Holiday, perfunctorily handling a heap of the clean-furrowed bark piled on the pavement in front.

I could see by this time that the old man's wanderings were aimless. He spoke to nobody, took notice of nothing. Still, as I had begun

to follow him, I thought I might as well continue to watch the strange way in which he kept Bank Holiday. Munching a crust which he took out of his trouser-pocket, he crossed the road in Whitechapel and turned into Petticoat-lane. Two barefooted little fellows were running a race in the generally crowded lane; another little boy was flying a kite. By Artillery-lane the old man mooned on into Bishopsgate-street, and then mooned out of it again into Houndsditch, which had an even more Sabbatic look than it wears on Saturday. Both Jew and Gentile shops were closed.

Although I have said that there was no method in the old man's wanderings, he seemed to turn by preference into quiet places. In Houndsditch there were only a few "o' clo'" men and women dribbling into Phil's Buildings, and a deliquescent man trundling towards them a truck laden with bagfuls of fusty garments, on which was perched like an organ-grinder's monkey, his black-haired, black-eyed, white-toothed, lemon-skinned, merrily grinning little son. In one of the narrow streets near Duke's Place, a wagon, with a name chalked, instead of painted upon it, was being eased of its high-piled load of cocoa-nuts by two surly youths, who pelted the old man with husk as he passed the loft into which the nuts were being pitched like bricks. He did not take the slightest notice, but trudged on into Mark Lane, where

it was easy to fancy that one heard mice nibbling the split grain in the closed Corn Market. Thence he doubled into Leadenhall Market, a silent solitude of alley after alley of close-shuttered stalls, save when a mob of hobbledehoy roughs rushed in for unchecked horse-play, and woke the echoes with their hideous yells.

Crossing the City he struck into London Wall. Its tall warehouses were all hushed. The hooks and balls of their crane-chains dangled otiosely in the air. Masonry can mesmerise, and a feeling of incipient coma came over me as I halted behind the old man in the front of Sion College. That dim-red old building, with its built-up windows, seemed sound asleep. Upon the other side of the road was the sunnily silent old graveyard, with its seventeenth century tablets, and its hoary fragment of Roman Wall. The blazing geraniums in the modern flower-beds, which have taken the place of the old graves, seemed the only things awake. I began to feel as dreamy as the old man, as I followed him through the streets and lanes which lie between London Wall and Cheapside, passing only a constable doing his beat by standing stiff as an obelisk at the intersection of four empty thoroughfares, and a maid-servant with a perambulator and three children leisurely strolling along the middle of Wood Street.

There were sight-seers in St. Paul's Church-

yard, but many-posted Paternoster Row, like Tokenhouse Yard, was silent and shut up as if in plague time. Whimsically heightening the resemblance, an upper window suddenly opened, a man in a white apron looked out, and a street-seller pitched him up a papered pint of shrimps. At a corner a little farther on sat a fruit-seller, nodding over his basket. Nobody seemed to be passing, or likely to pass him. I could not help thinking of the reduced gentlewoman, turned muffin-seller, who whispered, “I hope nobody hears me,” after each tinkle of her bell. Round about Paternoster Row there are old-fashioned public-houses that seem to have run into corners to hide. They had shut up—quite early in the afternoon—when the old man slunk round to them, looking as if he would have liked half a pint of beer, if he could have got it where there was no other customer.

Through the raw-beefy Smithfield mart for raw beef, with its gilt-banded and buttoned beadle, wandering like a gay ghost between avenues of tenantless stalls—through Lincoln’s Inn, where a knot of flushed barristers chatted with lay friends in the cloisters, jerking up their black gowns, and disclosing their grey nether garments as if they were still *me-ludding*—and the Temple, apparently given up to two very diminutive clerkkins splashing one another in Pump Court, the old man trudged on to the College of Arms, looking out, like the old

churches which the new street has exposed to the sunlight, as uncomfortably as a blinking owl on the new buildings, and hummocky wastes of dingy building ground and hoardings round about. I had grown tired of following him by that time, but before I left him I spoke to him.

This was the explanation he gave me of his wanderings :—

“Why, yer see, my old ’ooman is gone. Dead and buried she’ve been this three weeks. And so I thought I’d take ’oliday to-day as there worn’t nought to be done in my line. I couldn’t bide still at ’ome wi’out my pore ole missis. I’m lost like now I’ve lost she. I fare jest as if I was the wuss ’alf of a pair o’ scissors.”

XXII.

“PITY THE POOR BLIND.”

THERE is one of Dickens’s characters even more repulsive, perhaps, than Uriah Heep—to wit, Stagg, the blind man in “Barnaby Rudge.” And yet there is force in what he says to Widow Rudge, when he has tracked her and her idiot son to their country hiding place, and thrown off the mask—“Bah! you needn’t speak. I know what you would say.

. . . . Have I no feeling for you because I am blind? No, I have not. Why do you expect me, being in darkness, to be better than men who have their sight? It's the cant of you folks to be horrified if a blind man robs, or lies, or steals. Oh, yes; it's far worse in him, who can barely live on the few halfpence that are thrown to him in the streets than in you, who can see, and work, and are not dependent on the mercies of the world. A curse on you! You, who have five senses, may be wicked at your pleasure. We who have four, and want the most important, are to live and be moral on our affliction.”

But Stagg's, although, perhaps, a natural character from a novelist's *à priori* point of view, is, I think a very rare one amongst blind men. Of course, a man does not necessarily gain sanctity by losing his eyesight. Some blind men are scamps; but the proportion of scamps would, I am inclined to believe, be found to be less amongst blind men than in any other class of people. There may be a certain amount of cant in the religious tone which is so common amongst the blind, but a genuine *religiosity*, at any rate, seems to be very widely spread amongst them. This results, of course to a large extent, from, the fact that, if deprived of many pleasures, they are also screened from many temptations, and are

forced into habits of introspection. "The loss of sight changes a man," said a blind man; "he doesn't think of women, and women don't think of him. We are of a religious turn, too, generally."

Under the head of "Pity the poor blind," blind beggars first suggest themselves. There are still some literal blind beggars, men who stand by the highway side begging either verbally or by the mute appeal of a label inscribed "I am blind" pinned upon their breast; their dogs, with pleading eyes and anxiously-wagging tails, seconding the appeal. Some of the talkers merely toll out "Pity the poor blind," in a funereal tone, very much as the railway porters at Tring announce the name of that station: others indulge in little harangues. One day in a "Nelson" omnibus I fell in with a tall man, dressed in clerical-looking clothes, not nearly so greenish-brown and threadbare as those a good many overworked London curates are obliged to wear. Misunderstanding, or pretending to misunderstand, some remark I had made to a companion, the tall man began to lecture me loftily on the ignorance and inhumanity I had displayed in sneering at those whom it had pleased the Almighty to deprive of sight, quoting Scripture largely against me. I had said nothing about blind people, and did not know, until I looked at him closely, that the man was blind. However, as I thought

that I had wounded his feelings, I apologised for the unintentional offence I had given him, and we got into conversation, throughout which he maintained a *de haut en bas* tone towards me, laying down the law most oracularly, but throwing out hints now and then about money, which when I heard them I could not understand.

At last the 'bus pulled up in Deptford Broadway, and the blind man got out, graciously allowing me to shake hands with him, in token that he bore no malice, before he departed. When he was gone, a man at the top of the 'bus burst into a roar of laughter.

“Do you know who it is,” he said to me, “you’ve been talking so respectfully to all this time? The old rogue’s a blind beggar. He lodges somewhere about here,—not in Mill Lane, he’s a cut above that. He’s got a pitch just now in the New Kent Road, and rides to business and back again just like any City man.”

A few weeks afterwards I came upon my blind friend holding forth in his professional capacity to a congregation of half-a-dozen at a street corner in Camberwell, and found that he had given me a good bit of his street sermon in the omnibus.

This man, I should say, had quite enough ability—especially since he had no lack of self-assertion—to have made enough to support

himself without sponging on other people; but are there not a good many beggars that have their eyesight of whom the same might be said with greater emphasis? I am not standing up for blind beggars. They are, as I should have supposed, even if I had not been told by those who know them well, the blind people who are least worthy of pity—a pity that can be coupled with respect. But we must remember the exceptional difficulties a blind man has to encounter if he would really earn his own living. It is easy, therefore, to understand, although, of course, impossible to defend, the feeling which prompts a few blind men to make trading capital out of their affliction.

“Tom Thumb gets lots of money for not being his proper size,” says a blind beggar: “why shouldn’t I get a little money for not having my proper eyes? It ought to be made up to me somehow.”

There are, moreover, blind beggars, good authority states, who might have their sight restored, but who will not consent to have an operation performed; being of opinion that the result would be a “kicking-up-stairs”—they might recover some kind of sight, but they would not be able to make so much money.

The blind street musicians, monotonous blind readers on river and canal bridges, and blind sellers of small goods in the streets, are,

in a strictly logical sense blind beggars. People don't buy the goods because they want them, or pay for the reading or music, as a rule, because they like the sound; but because they pity the blind sellers, readers, and musicians. But this phase of blind beggary is markedly differentiated from the former. Of course, the two run into one another. Some of these sellers, and so on, only pretend to do something for themselves in order to evade police supervision and appeal more forcibly to the "charitable public;" but the bulk of them persuade themselves that they are giving money's worth for money. They want to feel that they are doing something other people can get some good out of, instead of merely lazily uttering, more or less rhetorically, "Pity the poor blind." To the credit of the London street blind, it should be recorded that they endeavoured to establish a benefit club without assistance; but it failed because there were not members enough to spread its risks over.

Some years ago one of the most "ken-speckle" sights in London streets was a blind old woman in a poke bonnet, with flabbily-plump cheeks, a nut-cracker nose and chin, and a good-natured grin, who ground out tunes from a hurdy-gurdy as if she were grinding coffee; whilst another old woman in a poke-bonnet held out the saucer, and kept hold of the hurdy-gurdyist, and affectionately sharp

watch over her, like dragon-watch with most enchanted eye, guarding fair Hesperian fruit. The two poor old women were run over, and the guide was killed upon the spot; the hurdy-gurdyist dodging Death, for the time, with broken bones. The two were taken to the hospital in the same cab; the broken-boned blind woman groping for her dead friend, and when she touched her, entreating the corpse to answer her. The blind woman, after a long while, was discharged from hospital. She was no longer able to play upon the hurdy-gurdy, but managed for a few months to hop on crutches to the houses of those who had been in the habit of giving her a trifle every week, and then—she died, alone, in one of those dismal courts running out of Gray's Inn Road. Another blind street musician I never see now; a Silenus-like man, who used often to be seen (generally in front of a public-house) performing lazily on drum and Pan's-pipes in a hoodless Bath chair, pulled by a boy, and pushed by a young woman. I am told that a blind-man beggar is considered a "catch" by female mendicants who can see. They think his loss a gain for themselves, and compete for engagement in his service.

The violin and the violoncello, the harp, the flute, the fife, bells, and bagpipes, are other instruments on which I have heard blind street-musicians perform. The proficiency in

music which blind chamber and organ-loft performers have been known to attain being taken into consideration, it seems rather strange that blind street-musicians do not reach a higher average of excellence, or, at any rate, endurability. In old times, the tradition runs, a blind street-musician could earn, or rather make his £2 a day in London streets. He certainly cannot make anything like that sum now. All classes of people, except the St. Simonians and the Millenarians, are apt to put their golden age in the past. I will speak of the street blind, however, further on; and give now a short account of a few of the many blind who wish to work, in the ordinary sense, for their living.

Not far from new St. Pancras Church there is an unpretending brush, mat, and basket-shop. You might pass it a dozen times without noticing any difference between it and other shops of the kind. But when you look more closely, you see that it is one of the depôts of the Association for Promoting the General Welfare of the Blind. The Association's title is painted above the shop, and one of its donation-boxes opens its ever-thirsty lips lower down. Here, and in a smarter shop in Oxford Street, the work of the industrious blind is exposed for sale. It is a varied collection. There are all kinds of brushes, brooms, and baskets; table-mats, fire-screens, clothes-beaters; dogs' houses,

bassinetts, children's chairs, wicker chairs, and garden-chairs. Besides making chairs, the blind re-cane them for a shilling each, including carriage from and to the customer's house. A blind traveller goes about in London to obtain orders.

Most of the Association's workers work at their own homes, but a few on the Euston Road and Oxford Street premises. It may be worth while to take a stroll over the Euston Road house. It is an old-fashioned place, full of unexpectedly-opening doors, up-and-down steps, and short, dark, winding, narrow, shallow staircases. In all the work-rooms capital fires are burning. In one, behind a counter horned with little vices, the brushmakers are at work. One man bores the backs with a machine; half a dozen others pop and wire the tufts of bristles into the holes quite as deftly as if they had their sight. Another man in the same room is making mops; as he finishes tying each, he poises it on his cord, and can tell in an instant whether he has kept the balance true. In another room eight women are tying up bundles of firewood, whilst a ninth sits on the floor re-caning a chair. She is a cheerful body, and laughs heartily when she is asked whether she feels for the holes. "No, no, sir," she says, "that would take up a deal too much time." And as she speaks, the lithe cane-slip goes in and out, up and down, under her swift fingers

with unerring precision. One mistake would make all her plait wrong. She can give no explanation of her *modus operandi* beyond—"It's just use, I suppose." When the remark is made to her that she could not do her work better if her blindness were cured, she answers pathetically, "Ah, sir, but I miss my eyesight in so many other ways." In the next room three or four men are tying up firewood, whilst an old man basks like a cat before the fire, drinking coffee out of a jug. A dark closet off this room is the storeroom of the blind superintendent of the blind workmen. Twine, bristles, &c., are ranged along its shelves, and he seems annoyed when he is complimented on the readiness with which he distinguishes light bristles from dark. "Why, any one that can see wouldn't want his eyes," he says, "to tell the difference between these two bundles. The touch is so different. Feel them for yourself. These black ones come from Russia mostly; these others from Moldavia—which is a part of Poland, you know," he unfortunately adds. When asked how he can tell whether work be not scamped, he answers, "By the weight and the feel—if a brush-back is the sixteenth of an inch out of the square, I can tell. I've done so more than once."

The Association sells a very large quantity of firewood. The next room is strewn with a rattling, crackling drift of it, which men, sitting

behind chopping-blocks, are momentarily making deeper. Another man, seated behind a slab of wood, in which a sharp-edged steel disc is supported on an axle, gives a call; four of the choppers rise and begin to turn a big wheel with winch-handles; the steel disc spins round, and the man seated at the slab, on which there is a raised bar to guide him, moves wood up to the disc's sharp edge and cuts it up into oblongs of equal size, shaving off even quarter-inches of superfluous breadth. He has never met with an accident.

One or two autobiographies of these blind workers may now be jotted down. At the Oxford Street depôt a tallish man comes up into the manager's room, is piloted to a chair, sits down, and speaks as follows:—

“No, sir, I've no objection to tell you about myself. I know what you want it for—for the good of the blind, I suppose. I lost my sight when I was six years old. It was an accident—a boy threw a stone at me. I was born in Durham, but I lost my sight in Yorkshire. I was recommended to come up to London; so I came, in '49, but the doctors could do nothing for me. I was got into St. George's School, other side of the river. I was there six years and-a-half, and then I was thrown on my own resources. I'd learnt shoemaking, but I couldn't make much out of it. Now I can do carpentering, and work a lathe, and I can make

mops, and brushes, and brooms, and baskets, and chairs. I walk in and out between this and Kilburn every day. Oh no, sir, I shall have no objection to see you any evening at my place, but it's a goodish step. *Friends come to see me?* Why, they live at Kilburn. Well, yes, I've had to wait five minutes and more at crossings. Folks have gone by, and took not a bit of notice. P'r'aps they didn't know I was blind. I can't say I wish I had my sight. I was so young, you see, when I lost it that I've never missed it. I suppose it was done for the best, or somethin' o' that sort. Yes, I can sing a bit, but nothing to speak of. I'm reckoned a good chess-player—leastways 'tisin't often I get beat. Sometimes I play with the boards with the raised squares, and sometimes with the common boards. Yes, I've got the whole board in my mind's eye like, and if you say, 'Queen to King's Bishop's fourth,' and so on, I've a full notion of where you've put her. Yes, I've *heard* of Mr. Morphy playing ever so many blindfold games at the same time—difficult work, *I* should say, to keep one board from running into another. It's curious, but I can't tackle draughts near so well as I can chess. Just because there's only the one slanting move, it bothers me. Oh, as to huffing, I've to feel all over the board before I can tell about that."

The next blind man has a very simple story

to tell, but his face twitches sadly before the poor fellow can force it out: "My wife's blind as well as me, but she manages the house famous—does everything as nice as need be. We've two children. Oh, no, *they* ain't blind."

Then there comes in a square-built, communicative man, though he is utterly deaf as well as blind. An intelligent lad is called up to act as interpreter, and puts my questions by touching the finger alphabet on the blind man's hand. When, however, I have learnt his address, and caught the trick of communicating with him, I go up to him to tell him that I will call next evening to have a chat with him at his own home. At first he thinks that I am only going to shake hands with him, and gives my hand a hearty squeeze; but when he finds that I am manipulating his fingers, his sightless face brightens up all over, and he exclaims, "Oh, I am so glad, sir, that you can talk to me!" After dark the next day I discover my blind and deaf friend's address, in a seedy street leading out of Oxford Street, and stumble up a dark staircase to his lofty lodging. I find that he has a wife and little daughter. The wife is busy in household cares—first bed-making, and then stitching. The little daughter is dispatched to a friend's for a carved horse and a leg-tobacco-stopper, which the blind man contributed to the Islington Workmen's Exhibition. She soon comes back with them,

proud and breathless ; bringing also the bound catalogue of the exhibition. Her father's name figures in it in print—it is the most important record in the world to the little girl, and therefore she can scarcely believe her ears—very openly compassionates my deplorable ignorance when I ask her what it is, as she lays it before me with a flourish.

The blind man guesses at my words before they are half spelt, and finishes my sentences for me before I have got half through them. To express assent I have to raise his hand; and to touch his arm in order to stop his rapid flow of speech. *Tick-tick* goes the clock in the smoky, crowded room. By the light of the little lamp that stands on the chapped oil-cloth cover of the little table, I jot down these notes of his history : "I am now thirty-two years of age. I was born at Hoxton. My parents were cowkeepers. I had one brother and two sisters. My brother is dead. One of my sisters lives at Walsall, in Staffordshire: the other comes to see me. I have been at work since I was nine years old. Father failed in business through disease in his cattle, and so I didn't get the education the other three had. I worked at three different places until I was fourteen years old, and at the age of fourteen I was apprenticed to a bookbinder's tool-cutter and brass engraver. I served there until the latter part of my seventeenth year. I worked until I could not

see the space between two leaders, and although an in-door apprentice, I had to come home, and was supported by my widowed mother and two sisters. Following June my mother died, and following March I quite lost my hearing. My misfortune came on by bathing. The water was very cold. I fell in, and it gave me a turn. One eye seemed as if it was covered with curd. I had my eye lanced, but wouldn't have it done again. And then the light went from me altogether, after a bit. First I could see my hand, and then I couldn't see anything, except that, night or day, there was no difference,—always a kind of light round me, but I couldn't see anything in it. Twelve months afterwards, my hearing went away from me. I carved chests, and so on, and modelled a horse when I was nineteen. My former employer gave me some books. Oh, yes, sir, I was perfectly fond of reading, and I soon learned to read the raised letters. I soon got through the books. There was "Matthew," and "John," and "The Psalms," and "Robinson Crusoe." Being told that there was a library in the Euston Road, and thinking I might obtain books there, I went, without the slightest idea of getting work there, and Mrs. Levy told me I could have some books. Then she took me into a large workshop, and I was introduced where there was a dozen men at work on brooms and brushes. Oh, yes, sir, I can judge of sizes.

Look at these two brushes now " (taking down two). " Ain't it easy to judge which is the biggest by the feel of 'em? Oh, about the size of the room? I felt somehow it was bigger. Oh, no, sir, I can't tell whether a man's tall or short till I put my hand on his shoulder. Oh, yes, sir " (with a grin), " I can tell now you're a long un. Mr. Levy was there, and asks me what I can do. I told him I could carve many things with my knife. 'Bring me some to show,' says Mr. Levy. I did so, and the first words he said was—' God has blessed your hands—you must come to work here.' Says I, ' I should like to work, but I'm afraid it will be very dull for me. I trust in a few months I shall be able to hear again.' But that wasn't to be. Yes, I'm a passable sort of a chess-player, sir."

The blind man mounts on a chair—his wife fancies he is going to make a spill of either himself or the things on the shelf he is fingering, and rushes to his assistance; but without any help he adroitly pulls out his chess-board from superincumbent strata of books, &c. Every other square is raised; all the squares have holes in them, like those of the railway chess-boards. My blind man dresses his board almost as quickly as I could have done it for him. I ask him how he can distinguish the two sets of men. " Can't you see, sir? " he answers, with a merry grin—" well, then, you feel." I find that the black men have all a tiny knob on

their heads. "But I don't care much for chess," he says. "I haven't time for it. On Saturdays I go out to Dalston and thereabouts for orders. And when I've got time, I'd rather have a friend that would come to talk to me or read to me. Chess is an unsociable sort of a game. You mayn't believe it, sir, but you're the only gentleman that ever came to talk to me in my own home. I often feel utterly all alone—I sit as quiet as an owl. Chess is just the same sameness all over again."

"Oh, yes, my little gal goes to school, and we pay for her," says the wife, "and she reads and writes very nicely; and my husband—though 'tain't orfen we can git to a place o' washup—explains the Bible of a Sunday evening beautiful, better than any minister."

And then she calls my attention to a Chinese-like puzzle of ball and rods, which her husband has carved out of a block of wood.

"I've been ten years trying to get into Day's Charity," says the blind man, who only appeals *ad misericordiam* when he is prompted by his wife.

"And he's far more deservin' of it than lots that have got it," says the wife.

"If you've any interest with printers, sir, will you say a good word for me?" says the blind man, as he gives my hand a good-bye squeeze. "I'm a good hand at making brushes to brush their type with."

"That he is—he can do anything he sets his mind to," says the wife; and then the lean little daughter lights me down the dark stairs.

MANY of the blind are both very quick and very sensitive. Before the former part of this paper (written for "Good Words") had been out a fortnight I found that it had been rather angrily discussed at meetings of the Poor Blind in London. I was accused of having been hard upon the blind in my descriptions and remarks. I can only say that I am heartily sorry that I should have given pain to these poor people. God knows that I meant no "hardness." I merely wished to give a fair statement of facts.

I have run through "Blindness and the Blind" (Chapman and Hall, 1872), dedicated by the intelligent author, the blind director, to the benevolent blind foundress of the Association for Promoting the General Welfare of the Blind. The book is an almost complete cyclopædia of interesting facts in connection with those who have lost their sight, and certainly the compiler deeply sympathises with those who share his affliction. Nevertheless, Mr. Levy fully bears me out in what I said or hinted, as to exceptional cases of indolence and immorality amongst the blind—indeed, he is far more severe upon them than I have been.

Let us now look in for a few minutes upon a Blind Class in Marylebone. It is held in a spacious church school-room. At first it seems strange that there should be only one gas-jet burning, and that half-turned down ; but even that, one soon remembers, without, however, really realising the fact, is not needed by the blind people present. Fourteen or fifteen blind men and women are seated on the two sides of an oblong table. Some of them are chatting and laughing most merrily, making jokes, heartily appreciated, not only by the makers, but also, a far rarer thing, by those for whose amusement they are made. All have books for the blind open on the table before them. Most of these look very much like the oblong music-books which swollen-cheeked cherubs hold in dim, yellow, old engravings. The little "sighted" guides who have brought the adult blind to the meeting, wander about the room curiously, or sit listlessly on the steps of the two school-galleries. The school-clock, in the dusky recess between the two galleries, looks so mournfully dim that it makes one think of an eye consciously losing its sight. But, as I have intimated, some of the blind folk are very merry, and almost all seem cheerful. The wag of the party evokes much laughter by describing a blind musician, known to the company, as possessing a fiddle nearly as high as himself. At the bottom of the table sit a blind woman

and her blind daughter, evidently of a superior social grade to that of their companions. The pleasantly and educatedly spoken blind girl is teaching three blind children—two girls and a boy—to read. The youngsters lark over their lessons—not to shirk them, but because they thoroughly enjoy them. The boy is getting instructed in vowels, and when, so to speak, he laughingly grabs one, he is as delighted as a little boy with eyesight would be if he had caught the warm, palpitating little bird on whose tail he had been directed to put salt. When the class is dismissed the little blind boy goes about with his blind sisters, making good-night jokes; turning to mirth all things of earth as only childhood can—blind childhood included, thank God! On the left of the top of the table sits a brown-faced, good-tempered-looking woman, in an abbreviated black-straw bonnet, noiselessly moving her lips, as her patient fingers traverse her book from left to right and from right to left βουστροφῆδον. Some of the readers mutter. Others proudly read aloud.

Next to my friend, Black Bonnet, sits an old woman, dreamily resting her grey-haired brow upon the hand of the arm she rests upon her book. Opposite Black Bonnet sits a bald-headed man, who is musing like the grey-haired old woman. He is almost deaf, as well as quite blind; his face brightens up when he

puts into his ear the little trumpet-apparatus, by means of which, he says, he can *nearly* hear everything *distinctly*. Next to him sits a man with a sensible face, who engages in an argument—sensible on both sides—with the wag as to the respective merits of different modes of printing for the blind. Next to *him* sits another good-natured-looking, plumper, woman in spectacles. She does not know that I am present, but, so far as I can make out, she is saying that it was too bad of “Good Words” to make the blind out to be worse than they are. It is very interesting—often painfully interesting—to listen to the shrewd, well-chosen words in which the Poor Blind discuss subjects mooted before them, or which they start for themselves. The case of a blind man who has become insane is mentioned. “Ah, *that* is the greatest affliction that the Almighty can allow to come upon any man—lose your reason, and what is left?” is the exclamation which springs simultaneously, in almost identical words, from a dozen pair of lips. “Yes, that—and fits,” adds quiet Black Bonnet.

In his book, Mr. Levy has laid claim to the possession of what he calls “Facial Perception.” This power of “seeing through the face,” as they call it, the Marylebone blind people, to whom the portion of Mr. Levy’s book describing it has been previously read, unanimously declare to be utterly foreign to their personal and

recollected experience. As there can be no doubt, however, that Mr. Levy believes in the personal experiences he has recorded, I will quote his account of this "unrecognised sense," as either a physiological or else a psychological curiosity:—

"Whether within a house or in the open air, whether walking or standing still, I can tell, although quite blind, when I am opposite an object, and can perceive whether it be tall or short, slender or bulky. I can also detect whether it be a solitary object or a continuous fence, whether it be a close fence or composed of open rails, and often whether it be a wooded fence, a brick or stone wall, or a quick-set hedge. I cannot usually perceive objects if much lower than my shoulder; but sometimes very low objects can be detected. . . . The currents of air can have nothing to do with this power, as the state of the wind does not directly affect it; the sense of hearing has nothing to do with it, as when snow lies thickly on the ground objects are more distinct, although the footfall cannot be heard. I seem to perceive objects through the skin of my face, and to have the impressions immediately transmitted to the brain. The only part of my body possessing this power is my face . . . Stopping my ears does not interfere with it, but covering my face with a thick veil destroys it altogether. . . . Dr. Saunderson could tell when a cloud

obscured the horizon. At one time I could do this with great accuracy, but cannot now trust myself in this respect. . . . The presence of fog interferes greatly with facial perceptions, the impressions of objects are faint and untrustworthy. . . . Ordinary darkness is no inconvenience; anything, however, which attracts the other senses, such as noise, partially occupies the attention of the mind, and so interferes with the impressions received through facial perception. . . . When passing along a street I can distinguish shops from private houses, and even point out the door and windows, &c., and this whether the doors be shut or open. When a window consists of one entire sheet of glass, it is more difficult to discover than one composed of a number of small panes When objects below the face are perceived, the sensation seems to come in an oblique line from the object to the upper part of the face. While walking with a friend in Forest Lane, Stratford, I said, pointing to a fence which separated the road from a field, "Those rails are not quite as high as my shoulder." He looked at them, and said they were higher. We however, measured, and found them about three inches lower than my shoulder. At the time of making this observation I was about four feet from the rails. . . . When the lower part of a fence is brickwork, and the upper part rails the fact can be detected, and

the line where the two meet easily perceived. Irregularities in height and projections, and indentations in walls, can also be discovered." (pp. 64, 66.)

"Is he quite dark, do you know?" is the question with which Mr. Levy's claim to facial perception is dismissed.

The quietly pleasant, hard-working superintendent of the class—a Fifeshire ex-Presbyterian, rather curiously developed into an Episcopalian Scripture reader in London, retaining only the faintest flavour of his native accent—goes round the class, having a little friendly chat with every member of it, making remarks on what is being read, and so on. The wag tells him that Thanksgiving Day has "fair ruined London for the blind street-folk." When asked to explain, he says that what with money given for seats, and the new dresses that were got, no one has any money left to lay out upon the poor.

"Well, but Easter and Whitsuntide are coming," a woman puts in.

"Ay," retorts the wag, "and whilst the grass is growing, the steed must starve."

The broad-shouldered, jolly-faced fellow looks so unlike starving that his dolorous prediction provokes a laugh. He joins in it heartily. "My looks will never pity my feelings, I know," he adds. "That's what I said to the matron when I'd been lying seventeen

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weeks and three days in hospital living on tea and bread and butter and weak broth, and she came in one day to ask me how I were."

The Scripture reader reads an extract from a book on physiology, making and encouraging remarks on what is read. Some one says that blood may be too rich as well as too poor.

"Well, richness won't be the fault of mine, I don't expect," says the wag with a chuckle. Then the blind people stand up and sing, "God moves in a mysterious way," &c., one deep bass rumbling like an organ-swell. A roguish little "sighted" boy tries to make his blind father laugh, instead of singing so solemnly. Afterwards short prayers are read, or rather recited, and then a parable and a miracle are chosen for the Scripture readings. The healing of blind Bartimæus is the miracle selected. I fancy for the moment that it may make the poor people repine at the thought that no one nowadays goes about restoring sight; but I can discover no trace of such a feeling. The general cheerfulness of the Poor Blind is the characteristic of theirs which chiefly strikes me. Of course they must feel their affliction, but as a rule, one would fancy that, so far as the mere pleasures of sight are concerned, they were not merely resigned, but quite contented under its loss. An old man who is asked to state what he knows about Jericho, fluently relates, with the self-satisfied glee of a child,

the history of its siege and capture as given in Joshua.

A verse is next sung, and the benediction uttered, and threepence a-piece is given to the blind people as payment for guides. When the rest have groped their way out into the rain, I get into conversation with a few who have remained to tell me something about themselves. The man I have called Wag and his blind wife are sitting together on a form. Wag says that "it is no good to let our spirits go down;" but he drops his funny tone in giving me the history of his hard life. Thus it runs :—

"Yes, sir, my name is Cattle. I live in the Marylebone Road. I sell with a hawker's license, and toil hard. I am out from ten till tea, and then am often obliged to go out again after class here to get a bit of bread. On Saturdays I am out till ten at night. I am led by a dog. I sell pens, pencils, almanacks—such things as are called stationery. Of course, I buy them at trade-price. I could not live if I bought them at a retail shop. I have been blind for twenty-eight years. I went to school and learnt to read and write well. I was a carrier's porter before the railways spoilt that business. Well—no, yes, no—I cannot say as to the police being hard on me. Well, yes, they will make me keep moving on. I was born in London. I make, perhaps, from eighteenpence

to eightpence per day—sometimes not that. If I could make one-and-ninepence a day I should be well satisfied. I'd broke my leg, when I lay seventeen weeks in hospital. On Sundays I go to church and chapel."

A merry-toned street-musician, of the name of Alexander, next tells me his story:—

"I play the piccolo now, sir; what I can afford to buy I play on; instruments wear out, you know. I'm out from eleven to six, and then again till twelve—sometimes one in the morning. Saturday and Monday are my two best nights, when men are in work. Portland Town and Cambridge and Oxford Terraces are my best places. Once a week I go:—never go anywhere oftener than once a week. I like to give everyone a fair chance. Oh, yes, of course, Christmas is the best time of the year for me. Everybody has got good feeling then. That's a settled case. No, I've no pension. You want influential friends to get any of the gifts.

"How do I get on at the crossings? Very well, thank you. I can manage. No, it's a mistake to suppose that people are ready to help blind folks over them. That's about the worst thing England has. There, they'll let you stand without offering to help you, unless mayhap a lady or a gentleman will come up and lead you across theirselves. Yes, I sometimes play in public. I'm bound to, and I'm forced to drink by the customers. If I'll taste

their beer they'll give me a copper, and if I won't, they won't. That's a regular case, and I've got a wife and three children, and five shillings-and-sixpence a week to pay for rent. It was through cold I lost my eyesight—inflammation, sore eyes. I'd a glimmer up to ten. Fever settled me. Oh, as to style of music, I suit it to my customers. Some like one thing, some another. (I tell him about Tittlebat Titmouse asking for "a little of both" to settle the *Before Jehovah's Awful Throne*, and *Battle of Prague* controversy.) "There now, that's what I call business. Oh, no, I don't mind telling you what I make. I like straightforward questions, because then I can give straightforward answers. From onesilling-and-sixpence to two shillings a day I reckon I ought to get, but I don't. Oh, yes" (bursting into a laugh), "I've heard that about blind musicians getting two pounds a day in London streets in *former* times. In *present* times you'd be two months about it. Sometimes I get hired for a dance, but very seldom, and then only by some one that knows me well. Sighted musicians, you see, are more amusing. I've been knocked down once or twice, but escaped, thanks be to God for it. I play by ear, but then, you see, one player has told me one thing, and another another, so that now I can understand notes when they're read to me. My missus and my children are not like me. The missus is sure

of her money; she goes out charing. Well, the children a'n't old enough to work yet. The girl is fourteen, and the boys eight and five. Sometimes I take one of 'em out with me. Not that I want him, but he'll say, 'Father, take me for a walk,' and, of course, I can't say no. The missus is too busy to take 'em. Well, yes, the police are pretty good—I've no complaint to make.

"Thursday is my worst night of all. Yes, I tap as I go along; but it's only to give folks warning to get out of my way. As you want to get the truth, I'll give it you."

The last blind man with whom I talk is the old man who gave the account of the siege of Jericho. His blind wife sits beside him. "Oh, dear no, sir," he says, "that's quite a mistake. I'm not a musician. I can read music, but I cannot sing or play at all. My name is Newton. I live in Paradise Place. I sell stationery, note-paper, and so on. I used to sell periodicals—"London Journal," "Bow Bells," and such-like—in Somers Town. Oh dear, no, sir, the police cannot interfere with me; I have my licence. I have a dog to guide me—this one I've got here" (the dog's chain is twisted round the old man's wrist). "I used to have a girl, but she was more bother than she was worth, and a dog won't tell lies, and cheat you, and keep the halfpence. My dog takes good care of me. If he sees a scaffold-pole, or a cellar-flap open, he

makes a sudden stop. He's over-cautious of the carriages, and often loses me a good chance of getting over a crossing. He won't move if he fancies there's any danger for me. His name is Jack. No, sir, I don't think he's a terrier. He's of some German breed, I'm told. The only fault I have to find with him is that he is excessively dainty. I feed him on greaves and crusts of bread and meat twice a week. It's very seldom I make two shillings a day; sometimes I don't take more than one shilling gross. Last Saturday I took the magnificent sum of eight-pence halfpenny. Any fine evening in summer is good for me. Saturday is my best day. Yes, I go into publichouses, and if I don't drink for the good of the house when a customer offers to treat me, the landlady won't let me inside again. I don't go into publicans so much now as when I sold periodicals in Somers Town. I had nineteen publicans there regular customers. I've been very ill for eighteen months—diabetes. My wife here sometimes goes out with me. Yes, she's blind, and so the Indigent Blind Society knocked off my one shilling a month for my marrying of her. But a blind woman keeps a blind man's house a deal tidier and comfortable than a sighted woman would. I mend shoes. I learnt the chair-caning after I was sixty years old, but I'm not quick enough at it. This is my third blindness. From eight to seventeen I could read diamond type. I became

totally dark about twenty-four years ago. I was operated upon at——, and left in darkness for ever. They care more there for the pupils getting practice than for the patients' welfare. A great many people date their total darkness from having been operated on there. Mr.—— told me that five out of six of the incurable blind that came to him, came from ——. Oh, yes, sir, my Jack will take me just wherever I want to go. If I was to say to him, 'Go to Whitechapel, Jack,' he'd lead me there straight. And now, sir, if you've no more questions to ask, I think we'll be moving."

XXIII.

LONDON HOLIDAY-MAKERS.

UNLOVELY sights may be beheld in London streets on public holidays ; but not so unlovely, I think, and certainly, at any-rate by day, not so many of them, as may be witnessed in Edinburgh's High Street, Canongate, Cowgate ; and Glasgow's Gorbals, Broomielaw, Argyll Street, Trongate, Briggate, Saltmarket, and Cowcaddens, on "fast" and other occasions of general festivity. John Barleycorn, in the form of what is ordinarily called malt liquor, does not madden as he does when meta-

morphosed into whisky. London holiday-makers do not look, perhaps, very wise as they take their walks and rides abroad. A considerable sprinkling of them are, at least "bemused in beer" very early in the day; a larger percentage take their pleasure in the serious style for which their forefathers were noted hundreds of years ago; but the bulk seem very "jolly." Eliminate the cowardly young "roughs" who go about in little mobs, jostling, howling, shrieking, shouting "Run 'em in," trying to get up rows, and measuring their enjoyment simply by the noise they make and the annoyance they cause, and good-nature would be pronounced the characteristic of Londoners when "all the world and his wife" are abroad.

A fine Easter Monday is an excellent opportunity for watching London in the real, not the "conceitedly exclusive "Society" sense, taking its pleasure. The Bank Holiday Act may, perhaps, have caused the day to be kept sacred from business a little more generally than it was before; but there was very little left to be done in that way.

Of course, there are sulky faces to be seen in London on Easter Monday, chiefly amongst tram-car and omnibus men, river steamboat men, railway officials, and policemen. Just when the public at large is taking its pleasure, they have to work harder than usual. Humanity being what it is, the consideration must be

trying, even to their well-schooled tempers. Wouldst thou know, reader, what the *lack* of solitude and silence is, and the trials to which the public's servants' tempers are sometimes exposed, enter, if thou canst squeeze thy way in, and dost not dread an oleaginous atmosphere, a Whitechapel tram-car on a general holiday.

The wheeled Noah's Ark glides in, humming on the trams, and disgorges its freight, who have to struggle through a stormy sea of insurging passengers. Before the horses, zebra-striped with sweat, can be removed from one end of the car to the other, the inside is crammed with holiday-folk, each who can find a seat nursing a male or female mate, while an irresistible force takes the roof by escalade. The perspiring conductor enters the car, and facing an unflagging fire of "chaff," with now and then a heavier discharge of blackguardly abuse, at last succeeds in ejecting the standers and the nurselings; but whilst he mounts the companion to clear the deck, more insurge; amongst them obese East End "ladies," who do not spare the grinning East End "gentlemen" who will not give up seats to them.

"Now look at all them gemmen," they satirically remark; "leastways, they fancies theirselves gemmen, an' yet there ain't one on 'em 'ill ride houtside to oblige a lady! Why don't you *make* 'em, driver?"

"There ain't room," he half growls, half chuckles; "an' if there was, I couldn't make 'em. 'Cos why? They wouldn't go."

(Here I may parenthetically mention that one *wet* Easter Monday night, when I chanced to have got a seat in an omnibus whose other inside passengers were all women, a drenched, but still rollicking Irishman, put his dripping hat in at the door, and gravely inquired, in a richly-racy brogue, "*Is* there any lady who will ride outside to oblige a gintleman that has a divil of a cowl'd ?")

When the tram-car conductor descends, he has all his 'tween decks work to do over again. Until the car gets under full way, he has constantly to repel adults who board on both quarters. Throughout the voyage he is persistently harassed by the more daring youngsters who hang on astern. The only poor little consolation that he might get he is too pestered to observe—to wit, that so many country cousins have come up to town that he and his vehicle are stared at ever and anon with the same open-mouthed, half-amused admiration they used to get in the days in which tram-cars were novelties in London. Cabmen also have more work than usual on holidays; but then their work is more than usually remunerative piece-work, and so, of course, they like it, and contribute their full quota to the general hilarity. Have not the cabman's wit and

humour, however, like the London street-boys' "cheeky chaff" grown faint and flabby of late—say since the would-be funny idiotic inanities of the music halls came into vogue? Or do we only fancy that we heard the comicalities we certainly do fancy that we used to hear on stand and street? My own impression is that there is far less genuine popular fun in London—and I may add literature—now than there used to be, but then I know this may be only the result of my own inability to find fun as I could of yore. I used to despise the old fogeys who could not "see the point" of the jokes which pleasantly pricked or tickled my youthful sense of the ludicrous, and my lack of appreciation of present-day facetiæ may simply show that I have become in my turn a wooden-headed old fogey to the rising generation. "Like leaves on trees," &c., only, together with general similarity there is marked difference in the successive outbuddings. Fun, like everything else, has its fashions, and mirth fulfils itself in many ways.

Whatever may be the difference between the past and present in humour, in far greater numbers than of yore do Londoners now-a-days take their pleasure. In street after street on Easter Monday the shops on both sides are close shuttered. The medalled man in uniform still mounts guard over the great tailor's shop in Oxford Street, and its plate-glass windows

are unshuttered and full-dressed, but can anyone really expect that anyone will go in to buy ready-made clothes on such a day? The country folk on their way to Madame Tussaud's, who stop to stare in at the little wax girl on her stuffed pony, appear to be under the impression that the establishment is one of the gratuitous sights of the metropolis. Besides these country loungers who drift about, now on this, now on that side of the way, in little shoals, there are drearier London loungers, single and in couples. They have got a holiday, but they don't know what to do with it. They have no money to spend, nowhere in particular to go to. They can simply "moon" about all day, watching others hurrying to and from amusements of some kind. There are plenty for them to watch. Tram-cars and omnibuses are crammed outside and in. Hansoms are darting about like dragonflies; even "growlers" are going at a brisk trot. In private omnibuses and gaily-curtained excursion vans, provided with big stone beer-jars, brass bands, and flaunting banners, in wagonettes, phaetons, gigs, spring-carts, furniture-vans, greengrocers' light waggons, costermongers' barrows, on horseback and on velocipede, in thronged trains ever rumbling out of the station-sheds, and steamboats swaying from side to side beneath their densly-serried loads, swarm forth the holiday-makers. Cambridge blue in hat and bonnet, scarf, cravat, sometimes

even waistcoat, lights up the crowds, which are also enlivened by volunteer uniforms, cricketing and boating costumes, and the grotesquely-gay dresses of football-players, who remind one, somehow, of circus clowns as they rush about, shouting and tumbling over one another, on Blackheath or Hackney Downs. You might fancy that all London was going out of town, and yet in North London, in South London, and in East London—and in West London, too—there are districts in which the mill-wheel of every-day life is grinding round as unrestingly as ever. I remember once when I was wandering in a dingy part of Lambeth on Easter Monday I saw only *two* holiday-makers, a sallow man in dirty shirt-sleeves, and his dirtier wife in an unfastened gown, lounging, silent and sulky, half out of a first-floor window. The man occasionally amused himself by spitting upon a passing child, and then again resumed his stolid stare at nothing. That was *his* mode of keeping Easter. I can imagine livelier ones.

It is in the very core of the City proper that the fact that Easter Monday is a general holiday most forcibly asserts itself from the negative side. Sealed are the Bank and the Exchange, all Princes Street and Lombard Street, save for the gaping letter-boxes of the Post Office. Capel Court and Austin Friars, Broad Street, Throgmorton Street, Threadneedle Street, Bartholomew Lane, Lothbury, are soli-

tudes. The cliff-like tenements in Cornhill give no sign of life save in the appetising culinary whiffs which issue, or rather the pleasant scent of spicy soup persistently breathed out like the aroma of a flower, from the ground-floor of one of them. Elsewhere in the great City restaurants there is no clink of glass, no rattle of knife, fork, and spoon; the waiters have ceased to hop about like seedy magpies; the cooks are eating, in the country, dinners which other hands than theirs have dressed. I wonder whether they enjoy them with peculiar gusto, or whether professional pride leads them to criticise their rural fellows unkindly, or at the best with contemptuous compassion. To show to what an extent the City that was full of people doth sit solitary on a Bank-holiday, I may mention that one Whit-Monday I witnessed a pic-nic luncheon of bread and cheese, sandwiches, and something drunk out of a black bottle, taken on the doorsteps of one of the Lombard Street Banks, a newspaper having been spread on the top step by way of tablecloth; and that shortly afterwards, turning into George Yard, I there came suddenly upon a most affectionate lovers' tryst, in broad daylight, between a maiden attired in Oxford blue and a swain sporting a Cambridge tie. I fancy that it must have been the making up of a lovers' quarrel caused through having taken opposite sides at the University Boat Race.

At any rate, Oxford and Cambridge had met together, Isis and Cam were very fondly kissing each other, when my footfall startled them. It was certainly fun to note how they bounded apart like electrified pithballs, but I was vexed with myself, and felt that they must feel half inclined to crucify me for having interrupted them. It is awkward, on both sides, to have to pass persons so suddenly severed when the startled and startler are the only three passengers in a hushed City court.

I like to listen to the remarks of sight-seers on general holidays, "Look at that there," said an old lady to her grandchildren, as the 'bus in which we were all travelling cleared Temple Bar. "That was built in the time o' the Edwards or the Henrys—I forgit which on 'em it was exactly—an' now they're goin' to pull it down—aint it a shame?—a hinterestin' old place like that! An' up there they used to stick the 'eads that was cut off, an' inside they keep the old bankers' books—'undreds and 'undreds on 'em!"

Another time I heard a matron say, "We're a-goin' to the British Museum this year, though South Kensington's a deal better. There can't be no comparison. If you know *anythink* about anythink, you're bound to enj'y yerself *there*."

Without entering into the comparison, it may be readily admitted that the "General British Public," whilst inspecting its national museum,

does *not* look as if it was intensely “enj’ying” itself.

The Zoological Gardens and the Crystal Palace are, I think, two of the best places to visit, if you want to see the general British public so doing. Both places gather great crowds on public holidays. It is not to be wondered at. Even as mere pleasure-grounds the park-surrounded Zoological Gardens are very pretty with their trees, shrubs, grass, flowers, and ponds; and as Zoological Gardens I should say they have no superior—I fancy, so far as I have seen or heard—no equal in the world. Is it the kin-making touch of nature—that always—and therefore more especially on general holidays—throngs the monkey house? There are more touches than one of common nature to be witnessed there; the comico-pathetically melancholy pair of orphan-like grey little monkeys cuddling each other in a corner—

“ Like babes bewildered in the snow
That cling and huddle from the cold
In hollow tree or ruined fold ; ”

the ourang-outang slyly putting out her paw for the buns, &c., which a keeper, whom she never takes her eyes off, is stationed to see that she does not obtain; the chimpanzee assiduously pulling its chair to pieces, and then squatting down to mend it as industriously; the larking young spider-monkeys swinging round on ropes

and giving their non-swinging brethren sound boxes on the ear as they go by, &c., &c., &c.

But the Crystal Palace finds even greater favour with the British public on holidays. There is more room to move about in there, and a greater variety of attractions. Let no one bound for the Palace on a public holiday take a first-class ticket under the impression that it will secure him "select company." The better way is to take a third-class ticket—and your chance. The third-class ticket gives you quite as good a chance, perhaps a better one, of being pushed into a first-class carriage, and in whatever class of carriage you may happen to be carried into by the excited throngs who "rush" the swiftly-succeeding trains, you will find much the same kind of crowded company. In all classes I have been nearly smothered, as it were between feather-beds, by plump matrons, and had my knees appropriated as perches by saucy servant girls. Of course, trodden-on-toes don't count. Everybody treads on everybody else's toes. The ride, however, is not a long one, and if you only keep your temper—do not give yourself airs—you may get a good deal of fun instead of annoyance out of the universal "squeegee"—together with (owing to the lack of reticence which distinguishes your companions) an insight into various phases of London life and character, which it might cost you weeks of research to acquire in other ways.

Of course there is a free give and take of "chaff" on such occasions. If you don't know how to give it back effectually, at any rate take it in good part. In a return train from the Palace on Whit-Monday I had for a wonder succeeded in getting a seat which enabled the railway company to carry out the latter half of its first-class contract with me. One of my fellow-passengers was a costermonger, who exultingly exhibited his ticket to show that he had secured first-class accommodation without having been fool enough to pay for it. A very smartly-dressed servant-girl looked into the compartment. "Come in, miss," said the costermonger, "if we can't make room for ye no other ways, you can sit on my knee."

Tossing her head in disgust at the "low feller," the servant girl flounced away, whereupon the costermonger put his head out of the window, and shouted after her, "Cushions ain't good enough for yer, arn't they, miss? Tellygrarf to the sekerinterry, an' maybe he'll send yer down a sophy."

And then how heartily on holidays the "popular" appliances for pleasure in the Palace are appreciated—how quaintly original are the remarks made upon its treasures of arts and science. I quote a sample or two of those which I have heard at various times. "Lookee 'ere, Bill,—'ere's a jolly lot o' sanguinary niggers agoin' to be scragged," cried a hobble-

dehoy to his companion, pointing to the rope gang on the walls of the Egyptian Court.

"Call *them* hanimals," incredulously exclaimed a confused wife to her almost equally confused husband, who had been hazily explaining, in reference to the megalosaurus, etc., that "there *was* sich hanimals, you know, afore the Flood."

"Oh, them's the crockindiles you've read about in Egypt," said a sire to his little son athirst for science.

"And what's them?" asked the son, pointing to smaller specimens in the same group.

"Oh, them's the crockindiles' kittens," was the father's authoritative reply.

XXIV.

THE CITY SUNDAY.

AN unwashed, unshaven labourer sits upon a milestone, kicking it with his listlessly-swung, unlaced boots, sulkily eyeing the closed doors and shuttered windows of a public-house, and exchanging sleepy growls with comrades opposite who are already waiting for the doors to open, meanwhile, to pass the time, employing in turn a shoeblack. No smoke rolls out of the factory chimney, and a rusty boiler basks

in the forecourt, still showing signs of having once been a garden, as if it hoped its rest might never again be broken. The little green arbours of the Tea Gardens are deserted, and the old sign sways softly over the old water-trough, as if it were rocking itself off to sleep. The warm wind rustles the leaves of the trees that shade the churchyard, and ruffles, too, the leaves of a list hung upon a church door.

"What's that?" asks a little girl, holding on to the smallest although not little finger of the brown hand of her father, a red-faced navvy in clean, white frock, and other Sunday best, who is leisurely taking his walks abroad, sunning his broad back, like a cart-horse, in the Sunday shine.

"Catlog o' a sale, most like," answers the huge parent, whose information is not equal to his size.

Two costermongers, who have clubbed their donkeys and harnessed them to one barrow, rattle by upon it; riding out not on business, but for a holiday. A knot of grimy boys are also starting for the country, with their jackets—those who have got any—thrown over their shoulders. For a space the sunny roadway, and the sunny footpaths on both sides are vacant, but there come half-a-dozen bird-fanciers, with handkerchief-covered cages under their arms, and after them two sly-faced bird-catchers slouching along with their poles and packs

upon their shoulders. The crossing-sweepers have already taken their stands, although they are likely to obtain the reverse of commendation rather than coppers if they ply their brooms on this dry, dusty day. A single omnibus rolls by, without a single passenger. The cabmen on the rank lounge inside their vehicles, reading or asleep, or loll with their elbows sprawled on the warm hansom roofs. A cattle train rumbles across the railway bridge with measured pant—one puff of vapour almost vanishing before another makes its appearance—and it is hard to say which looks the sulkier, the heavy-eyed bullock lowering between its bars, or the guard, robbed of his Sunday, as he hangs half out of his van. In a dead-walled corner a knot of cattle-drovers, who look as if they had never washed their faces, or put on more than one clean shirt in the course of their lives, are playing pitch and toss. Farther on tract distributors in couples are tendering their flyleaves to the passers-by, and children hurrying or loitering to Sunday-school. The clamour of a street market, in which draggled, depressed-looking women are cheapening flabby meat and wilted vegetables for their Sunday dinner, comes next, and then the bells leap out in silvery peal, or toll with brazen clank and tinkettle tinkle, and the streets become gay with smartly-dressed church and chapel goers, and gilt-edged bibles, prayer-books, hymn-

books, bound in ivory, or gilt-rimmed, gilt-crossed purple morocco. Working-men roll out from the easy-shaving shops with fresh-mown chins, and their hands in their pockets. In and about the Sunday paper-boarded tobacconists cluster tallow-faced mannikins, whose pipes and cheap cigars add no Arabian perfume to the air, and the sellers of lemonade and ginger-beer have begun to do a brisk trade from shop and stall. From the foot of Blackfriars Bridge crammed tram-cars are rolling off to Clapham, Brixton, Peckham, and East Greenwich. Up and down the river go crowded steamboats, a gig darts along as if its eight blue-bladed oars obeyed a single will, and less well-pulled wherries splutter about like flies in a slop-basin.

Men, women, and children are basking quietly on the Embankment and in the Embankment gardens, but even here the young rough must howl and hustle. It is a curious revulsion of feeling one experiences when, after looking up at the grey and purple dome of St. Paul's, the eye is turned upon that swarming product of the city over which its guilt cross shines, clearly defined on the blue, cloudless sky,—the mobs of mannikins that go about, seeking whom they may annoy. The Temple Gardens, however, smile in verdant peace. A line of carriages stretches along Fleet Street from the Temple Gate. The closed new *Times* office symbolises

cessation of business in the big city, but not so forcibly, I think, as the old one, hidden, still as a hushed heart, in its dingy recesses. St. Sepulchre's bell is giving its last toll as the charity girls, demure little maidens in old-fashioned caps, file in beneath the inspection of the gorgeous beadle. Newgate Prison is not generally considered one of the architectural ornaments of London, but it and Westminster Abbey seem to me the two London buildings which best represent externally the purposes for which they are intended. Sternly enough, as if the sunshine were an offence to its eyeless face, frowns the black and grey fetter-hung gaol. Hard by, the shut-up Smithfield Markets, the chequer-walled Charterhouse, and the old-fashioned houses that stand along three sides of the leafy, grassy square garden, seem to be dozing with less troubled breath now that for a time the trains have ceased to rush along the railway, which has shorn off one of the sides of the square in which monastic quiet used to brood. In a street outside, in front of a week-day dancing-school, there is a bill which invites "All" to enter to hear the Gospel preached. A pale-faced, shabbily-dressed woman, looking wofully in need of glad tidings of even a little joy, slips into the narrow passage which leads into the preaching-room. Not many besides herself have as yet obeyed the all-embracing summons; only a few people, chiefly women or

girls, with fagged faces and in faded dresses; not ragged or dirty, but not smart enough to go to church, and not rich enough to go to chapel, with its probable chance of a "collection." Their pastor, a little man in seedy black, gives out a hymn, and the little congregation sings it with thin, quavering voices, which, nevertheless, have a sound in them of rest and hope of far-off happiness.

In the yard of the sealed Post Office, dingy white mail boxes and ruddy mail-carts are taking sunny rest together; no foot-falls in shuttered Paternoster Row and its purlieus; and in the high-walled streets and lanes behind Cheapside—on week-days often blocked with traffic—the only people that I pass are a meditative policeman, and a widow woman resting on a door-step. A boy is making a bicycle scurry over the asphalte of Cheapside, and an old gentleman is driving his old lady along it in a little pony chaise—both evidently proud of the nerve and skill which he displays in being able to pass, without collision, a single, very intermittently dribbling, line of omnibuses.

The organs of the city churches drone as if the old buildings were softly singing in their sleep. Outside St. Margaret's, Lothbury, sits the verger gazing at the blank wall of the Bank, and sunning himself complacently as he listens to the lulling strains. In Throgmorton

Street, otherwise untenanted, stands an empty omnibus. No driver or conductor is visible, and the horses seem to have gone to sleep. In Bishopsgate Street there is bustle once more, a seemingly purposeless bustle, for the most part; people surging this way and that way, or mooning about as if they did not know what to do with themselves.

Some of the shops in Houndsditch are open, and dingy Jews and Gentiles are buzzing about the Phil's Buildings entrance to Rag Fair. More gaily dressed Jews and Jewesses are still selling fruit in the unglazed shops of rubbish-littered Duke's Place, where oranges and lemons, owing to the grimy shabbiness around, look more brightly, purely golden than anywhere besides. There is more Jewish and Gentile bustle in Aldgate and Whitechapel—open shops, bawling stall-keepers, dawdling loungers; more sensible folk shouldering their way eastwards to get a breath of fresh air. In Petticoat Lane proper, redolent of fried fish, dissonant with the shouts of shopkeepers, and the yells of roughs trying to get up rushes, you might walk on the heads of the two jostling lines of close-packed passengers.

In Hoxton a worthy man mounted on a chair is denouncing "*Renegades! Renegades!! Renegades!!!*" a costermonger throwing in ever and anon an ironical "Hear, hear, hear." Farther on, another preacher is bewailing at the

top of his voice the bygone happy days of innocence, in which he had never struck a bagatelle ball, or even knew what dominoes meant. But now their congregations have swarmed out from church and chapel, again brightening the thoroughfares with purple and fine linen; the Metropolitan trains are running once more; fathers and mothers of families are returning from the baker's, bearing homewards, with cautious speed, the shoulder of mutton and batter pudding, toad-in-the-hole, leg of pork and potatoes, or whatever else may be the family dinner; and maidservants and mechanics are hastening to the taverns with their jugs for the dinner beer.

As soon as the tavern doors swung, they were besieged by those who had been waiting all the morning for them to open, who will remain inside until they are turned out, when the houses are again closed in the afternoon, stupid, savage, or idiotically "merry," to annoy more rational people, and who will return to the public-house, when once more open in the evening, to finish off their Sunday in the utterly joyless manner (to all appearance) in which so many of the lower class of Londoners inexplicably fancy that they find delight.

XXV.

AN AFTERNOON IN ST. ALBAN'S PARISH
(1868).

THE present writer's "private views," of course, are not of the slightest public importance, save as they may affect his character as a faithful reporter. For that reason only, I may mention that I have no sympathy with "Ritualism," beyond an occasional liking for its pictorial effects and beautiful music, just as one likes to go now and then to the opera. At the same time, it is impossible to withhold respect from men of a palpably "æsthetic" turn of mind, who, for religious reasons, plant themselves in a district in which every sense, artistic, moral, and physical, is constantly shocked, and live in it day and night, earnestly labouring, to the best of their belief and ability, for its amelioration. I had heard that the Anglican priests of St. Alban's, Holborn, were such men, and that the district was one in which even a mosque might have been welcomed as an ethical agency; and, being of a truantly inquisitive disposition, fond of ascertaining at first-hand the various manners of various men, I took the liberty of applying to Mr. Mackonochie for facilities to inspect his parish, and they were granted with obliging promptness, although I had plainly

written myself down a non-ritualist. I shall try to make my report as purely narrative as possible—of what I saw and heard, nothing extenuating, and setting down naught in malice.

On my way to the Clergy House (a gabled, somewhat convent-like building of red-streaked yellow brick, with an iron-gated porch, adjoining the "house of prayer," which Mr. Hubbard has erected on the site of a "den of thieves," the once notorious Gray's Inn "Kitchen"), in order to call upon the clerical coadjutor to whose guidance I had been consigned, the first objects that attracted my attention, as I drew near the end of Brooke Street, were placards pasted high up on the walls within eyeshot of the Clergy House, defiantly announcing the "Triumphant Election of a Protestant Churchwarden." Whilst I was looking up at these a begrimed little cockney Irishman fastened himself upon me as a *cicerone*, with a confidently alternative inquiry of, "Is it the chur-ruch, sir, or the Clargy House that ye're wantin'?" At the gate of the Clergy House another smutty small boy, in a trochaic pair of trousers, and a shirt with *hiatus valde deflendi*, sprang sideways at the bell-pull, like a trout leaping at a fly, and rang a lusty peal. The black-coated servitor who answered it, apparently under the impression that I was a recent convert come for the first time to con-

fession, speedily ushered me up a stone staircase to a study on the second floor. A whimsical recollection of Giant Pope's Cave in "Pilgrim's Progress" occurred to me as I went in, but what I saw was not an "old man, crazy and stiff in his joints, grinning and biting his nails," but a tall, active, earnest, and intelligent-looking young "Father Clement," holding out his hand with a smile of courteous welcome. "Father Clement" was clad in a silk cassock, a cloth cape something like a horse-soldier's (I am not up in the nomenclature of ecclesiastical dress), and a vandyked cloth cap, that suggested a just-budding mitre. There was mediæval furniture in the book-lined room, candlesticks of ecclesiastical type, a picture of the Holy Family, another of the Virgin, an image of the robin, with its sacredly-stained breast, and such-like; but the mildly-thoughtful bust of the Bishop of London, loyally placed in a post of honour, looked with pensive forbearance on it all; and I soon found that my animated interlocutor was no mere dreamy or *dilettante* admirer of an ecclesiastical past galvanised into spasmodic seeming vitality in the present, but firmly convinced that his form of Christianity was the only one that could get a real practical grip on living men and women,—especially on the degraded ones swarming around the Clergy House. The basis of Ritualism, he said, was a belief that all human flesh was lovable and

venerable, because Christ had worn the human form, and, therefore, the most depraved ought to be looked on, and looked after, as saintly brethren in obstructed embryo. Confession, this politely, but unflinchingly, outspeaking young priest did not apologize for, but championed as the only means by which a spiritual director could give individual guidance to his people: "mere preaching was like talking to a flock of sheep." A dread of confession was felt at first, but those who once resorted to it soon thought it an inestimable privilege. Just before the Easter and Whitsuntide communions, it was as much as four priests, sitting all day long at the Clergy House, could do to get through the confessions. This struck me as very startling, and I was still more astonished to hear of the class of people who resorted to the confessional; as I had fancied that Ritualism, like forced peas or pineapples, was a dainty in which only the wealthy indulged. The poorest parishioners of St. Alban's, it seems, contribute the largest quota to the number of its *local* communicants; and Ritualistic "missions" have been highly successful amongst soldiers, colliers, and, of all people in the world, jockeys!

My "Father Clement," unlike Miss Grace Kennedy's, had a considerable sense of humour. He described with great gusto the response which his appeal to the "unrespectable classes" evoked, when he addressed them as being him-

self "quite unrespectable," a "sad scamp," who, in ratepayers' estimation, had "lost his character ever so long ago"—finishing off with "birds of a feather," &c. He seemed to find more amusement than annoyance in the efforts made by the emissaries of what he called "the Protestant party" to thwart the tenants of the Clergy House in their parochial labours, flocking after them in their visitations to uproot the just-sown wicked tares, openly calling them "Jesuits," and placarding the parish with posters, from whose small type stood out in bloated capitals—

BEWARE!

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CREEPING PRIESTS!!

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BLEEDING LIES!!!

Another device of these zealous Reformers was the distribution of cards, like concert tickets, bearing the inscription "ST. ALBAN'S, HOLBORN.—Admit the bearer to see the Winking Virgin and the Bleeding Saint. The Virgin will commence to wink at five o'clock. The Saint will begin to bleed at half-past." Several of these tickets were presented at the church-door by expectant sight-seers. "Father Clement," as a High Churchman, was, of course,

shocked by the profanity of this satire : but I fancied I saw a twinkle in his eye as he recited its coarse jocosity. Altogether he was so different from the prim, pompous being a "High Church parson" is often supposed to be, that I could not help remarking to him how widely he differed from the popular notion. "Oh, yes, I know," he said, with a laugh. "They fancy that we have faces always as long as that!" (putting his hands about a yard apart). I was no more of a Ritualist at the end, than I had been at the beginning, of our interview ; but I had certainly got a new idea of a Ritualistic clergyman. Instead of a dogmatist, as stiff as starch,—a somewhat spooney spectre, "walking ever with reverted eyes," fixed on its beloved Middle Ages,—I had found a genial quick-witted man, of nineteenth century flesh and blood, able to laugh with all his lungs, and, whilst fixedly (however funnily) of opinion that his own theological system is by far the best adapted to the wants of the Present, willing (at any rate, in word) to make wide allowances for diversity of views,—even to bid God-speed to the worthy city missionary who dogs him on his rounds, under the conscientious conviction that he must be somewhere visibly branded with the mark of the Beast. When Charles Lamb was told that if he really knew certain people he was abusing, he would not speak so harshly of them, he

naively retorted that he didn't *want* to know them, because then he "couldn't ha—ha—*hate* 'em." If High Churchmen and Low Churchmen foregathered with one another a little more, there might perhaps be a good deal less mutual rancour.

To give me an idea of the dwellings and characters of the poorer parishioners of St. Alban's, the priest I speak of kindly offered to take me with him on his rounds, on any afternoon I liked to choose—making his visits, of course, on the occasion, chiefly friendly instead of spiritual. Four priests and one deacon reside in the St. Alban's Clergy House; the clerical staff being completed by a sixth clergyman, who is there less frequently. The parish is divided into districts, visited by benevolent ladies from the West-end, who make out lists of the cases most urgently calling for clerical care, relieve the poor themselves, and furnish them with tickets entitling them to receive wine, brandy, beef-tea, arrow-root, &c., at the Clergy House. Every evening, at six o'clock, from thirty to forty applicants are thus relieved.

St. Alban's—reputed, by those most likely to speak well of it, in proof of the success of their labours, to be one of the most immoral parishes in London—is an irregularly oblong block, cut out of the overgrown St. Andrew's, Holborn. According to the map, it is rather

less than a quarter-of-a-mile long, where longest, and about two hundred yards wide, where widest. Within these narrow limits some seven or eight thousand people are huddled together. The parish is bounded on the south by Holborn, and the passer along that broad thoroughfare by daylight may see, at the mouths of the courts which give on it, lurking specimens of the boy and hobbledehoy thieves who burrow in the parish's inner warren of lanes and courts—dirty, heavy, hang-dog visaged young fellows, with a glance half furtive, half ferocious—most *unlike* Mr. Dickens' astute "Artful Dodger," or lively "Charley Bates." Liquorpond Street, with its lofty breweries, sacks dangling from cranes—like a bobbing Titian's baits for whales—warm gushes of steam, saccharine scent of grains, block of drays, and huge glossy drayhorses, is the northern boundary of the parish. The lower part of Gray's Inn Lane bounds it on the west: a quaint thoroughfare, with the high, dingy old Inn of Court on one side,—its sombre gateway, its wired and rusty-barred windows, and its fantastically-holed, sun-blistered shutters, all bedimmed with smoke, furred with dust, and splashed with mud; and, on the other side, old weather-board houses, with projecting stories supported on the shoulders of grotesquely-grinning wooden figures; cavernous furniture-shops, choked with damp or

dusty second-hand office tables, music-stools, and marble-topped wash-hand-stands; old book shops, with mildewed classics and law books, and fly-spitten prints of forgotten celebrities; and "miscellaneous dealers," where you can get change for Irish or Scotch bank-notes, and buy a china vase, a picture, amber through age or varnish, a yellow roll of songs once famous at Vauxhall, a guitar whose strings have not been strummed since its now direly tarnished gilt tracery was bright, or, if you have a taste for eccentric curiosities, a battered Chinese gong. But a still queerer locality is the parish's eastern limit, long, narrow Leather Lane. So very narrow is its cleft-like Holborn end, that when, owing to diversion of traffic, an omnibus gets there, it seems as if it must necessarily stick, like a fat man in an arm-chair, between the forward-leaning walls. On either hand there is a shop with an Italian name on the lintel, Italian images in plaster and terra-cotta in the windows, and plaster "roses" hung like shields upon the door-posts. Beyond, in an avenue, a street market brawls all day long, and far into the night. Where no street-stall is pitched, the shopkeepers expose their wares upon the pavement, and thus the oddest imaginable "assortment of goods" is set out in parallel lines. This man, with specimens of his stock stuck in his hat-band, as if they were a wreath of roses, is selling

shrimps at a penny a pint. The next, out of curiously muffled vessels that seem to be made of molten gas-pipes, is dispensing penny and half-penny ices.

A penny will buy a good many things in Leather Lane. It will buy a glass of sherbet, or from three to four windfall oranges arranged in pyramids, and with skins as discoloured as more than a couple of the vendors' cheeks beneath the eyes; and here, where a constant tinkling is being kept up on an earthen pan, you can take your pick out of a box of stoneware, "all at one penny." "Mackereel all alive, all alive, oh! fine silver mackereel, six a shillin'," shouts one coster; "All a blowin', all a growin'," hoarsely croaks his neighbour over his eye-and-nose refreshing trap of flowering spring plants. Eels and eggs; tin-pots and gown-pieces; crabs and combs; hardbake and bonnet-shapes; dates conglomerated into a mass that looks as if it would need a hatchet to split it; and buttons, bugles, and other trimmings, set out daintily on blue cards; potatoes and periwinkles; cabbages and cocoanuts, whole or fractional; great wanned lemons and brass-tagged boot-laces; boots and shoes, and beds and bedsteads; onions and old iron; plaice and photograph frames; radishes and rhubarb, and glass beads and bottles; red herrings and money boxes; smoked haddocks and Dutch dolls; whelks, watercress, almond-

rock and monkey-checked apples; brass-headed nails and curious little slabs of bacon; all these are only *some* of the things which are sold *al fresco* in Leather Lane. Meantime, roughs loaf about; stray soldiers spangle the squalid throng with their bright uniforms; some indignant mother is always doing battle by fist or tongue, with man or woman on behalf of her howling offspring, unrighteously kicked or cuffed; a rich infusion of Milesian brogue mellows the strident hubbub; and high over all, caged larks pour out their pathetically joyous songs.

From Leather Lane to Gray's Inn Lane runs the cramped thoroughfare in which St. Alban's Church stands—Baldwin's Gardens. Architecturally speaking, and with (considering the locality) an excusably Hibernian choice of metaphor, the handsome modern church—handsome in spite of smoke-stains and merely brick material—looks the only wholesome plant that has sprung from the gardens since Baldwin plucked roses in them. (I say nothing about the plant's "odour of sanctity," since that is a moot question; or of its literal fragrance, since *that* has been stopped as illegal—except, in reference to the latter, that the incense-fumes, if they floated outside, might, perhaps, have been useful in a sanitary point of view.) Architectural considerations apart, there is another oasis (to make use of another muddled metaphor) in the present wilderness of Baldwin's Gardens,



a national school, under the patronage of the plaintiff in the famous suit of "*Martin v. Mackonochie*," stated, even on Ritualistic authority, to be a most admirable one. I may add that the same authority (although he seemed to think that it was something like seething a kid in its mother's milk to have had the "office" of the beloved bishop by whom he was ordained "promoted" against his beloved immediate superior) spoke in the highest terms of the personal character of the "promoter." As a whole, Baldwin's Gardens have a very blighted look. Beginning at Leather Lane as a narrow street, with poor shops and dismal upper floors let off to poverty-stricken tenants, they dwindle, before they reach the cramped archway that gives upon Gray's Inn Lane, into a still narrower flagged alley, hemmed in by a shut-up public-house; shops in which children's second-hand frocks, the rustiest and apparently most useless of old metal, and dusty, broken furniture, which seems to have been exhumed from the ruins of an earthquake-buried city, are offered for sale; and houses of no patent profession, whose darkened windows may be blinds for more than one kind of darkness-loving deeds. "Bad houses," regular or occasional, are deplorably abundant in St. Alban's. In one of its streets—bearing the synonymous name of one of the brightest lights of English philosophy and Elizabethan litera-

ture—there is a *row* of brothels. The clergy, albeit Ritualists, are men of common sense; and, considering it next to miraculous for the poor—the young especially—to lead a moral life in a place so built and crowded that feelings of decency must necessarily be blunted, they encourage those of their poorer parishioners who have come under their influence to flit to localities in which virtue stands a better chance. However we may talk about the omnipotence of spiritual agencies, there is indubitably great moral, or immoral, force in the arrangement of brick and mortar. Brooke's Market, hard by the Clergy House, is another locality that deserves a word of description. In the middle of its quadrangle there is a row of weather-board hovels, daubed with rusty tar, of almost as primitive construction as Canadian log-huts. Some of them are close shuttered and padlocked, but one is tenanted by a chimney-sweep, who has stuck up his brush outside as a sign of his profession. Both sweeps and scavengers affect St. Alban's parish. One of the scavengers is a Ritualist, and to show his gratitude to the spiritual father who converted him, brings—guess as long as you like, you must give it up—*nosegays* to the Clergy House.

St. Alban's district was broiling like rancid bacon—a strange contrast to the umbrageous avenue and verdant grass of Gray's Inn Gardens, from which I had just turned—on the



bright May afternoon on which I joined my clerical guide for a parochial ramble. I had half expected to find him still in his cassock, but that was doffed, and he wore the dress, clerical "dog-collar" included, in which Roman Catholic priests usually take their walks abroad. It did not seem, however, to win him much reverence from the Romanists amongst his parishioners. They glanced at him suspiciously, as if they could not exactly make him out—somewhat as young swallows might at a bat zigzagging past their nest. He was very much like the parent bird, but still he was not the real thing. Some of the shopkeepers, too, silently scowled at him, but he made charitable allowance for their hostility. They disliked his views, and even if they were inclined to come to their parish church on Sunday, the chances were that they might be crowded out of it in the morning by the fashionable folk who flocked to its services; "but what can we do?—the seats are free, and the first comer is first served." The poorer parishioners, too, he said, were but sparsely represented at the forenoon services. "They had their Sunday dinner to cook—an important item in the poor man's economy." A good-natured excuse to be made by one who leads the abstemious life with which, not in Lent only, the inmates of the Clergy House are credited. The great majority of the poor amongst whom we passed, however, were

perfectly respectful to their pastor. It is something like calling on a rabbit in a warren to find out a tenant of a particular room in St. Alban's. We now and then had to stop to inquire which of several common stairs was the right one to go up, and in every instance the loungers appealed to answered "the parson's" questions with civility, some of them with smiling cheerfulness and welcome. The only thing approaching to a personal insult which he received was a very innocuous one. An exceedingly small boy, not yet promoted to the dignity of breeches, and vague in his notions of ecclesiastical polity, shrilly shouted, "Theer goes hold S—— o' the Hirish church!" and then took to his heels as if such caustic satire must necessarily provoke the most vindictive vengeance. My guide certainly merited civility, for nothing could be more courteous than his manner to the poor. There was not the slightest trace of Mrs. Pardiggle-ism in it. He chatted with the old women, and joked with the little ones, far more like an eldest son and a big brother than the conventional "proud priest." He took off his hat to bobbing apple-women, and shook hands with any of his "children" he met in the street, however dirty might be their paws. One of these "children" was a stout young man, labour-stained and perspiring. Another was a grey-haired old man who sold lettuces and watercresses, and when asked

whether the fine weather did not spoil his market by making vegetables too plentiful, answered that he "didn't care how cheap green stuff got, for then the poor could buy the more on it." The spectacular nature of its services may, perhaps, partly account for the favour which Ritualism is said to find amongst the poor, but I am inclined to think that affability of the kind just described, if generally practised, has far more to do with it. When the Reform Leaguers marched with their banners from Clerkenwell Green to St. Alban's Church, the only reason they could assign for their procession was, that they believed Mr. Mackonochie to be "a friend of the people." Before visiting the sick we looked in at the church school, held on three floors of an old warehouse; the average attendance being about 140 daily. The rooms are rather low, and the beamed ceilings made them look something like 'tween decks; but the children seemed to be bright, interested, and well-behaved, and, considering the nature of the homes from which a good many of them must come, they were wonderfully clean. The teachers appeared to be intelligent persons, working with a will. The mistress of the Infants' School looked very disappointed because we had not time to see her little army of infantry go through any other general evolution than a salute, which they performed with military precision. Besides these schools, the

church has another in Mecklenburgh Square, where the choristers are educated.

Stumbling up a low, narrow, crooked, wooden staircase, one flight of which had just been scrubbed, but most of the steps of which were very dirty, we reached, at the top of the house, what was far more like a triangular manger than a human habitation. It was simply a corner boarded off from the landing. A patched sack was the only door, and within, in the dark, lay a moaning old woman, a sad drunkard.

In a somewhat larger and lighted room in another house—larger, but almost filled by a small bedstead, whose posts had been truncated to suit the lowness of the ceiling—a stifling-hot fire was burning. Two tiny earthenware teapots stood upon the hobs. A tea-tray was upon the floor. There were only two chairs in the room. Propped up in one sat a poor creature, wheezing for breath, whose husband had recently stabbed her, and broken three of her ribs. The other chair was given up to me as a stranger, whilst the clergyman, and the sick woman's sister, who had come to take tea with her (bringing her own teapot), seated themselves on the two ends of the bed. When the pastor spoke gently to the sufferer of the peace to be derived from resigning our wills to that of "the good God," whether for life or death, the poor creature burst into a flood of frightened tears. The idea of death was awful to her. To soothe

her, she was told that even the most holy men had thought it a solemn thing to die; but here the sister, accustomed to the often deadly brawls of Holborn courts, struck in, scouting such feeling as cowardly. "Oh, come now, Mr. S——, I don't see that. Do the best you can, you know, and then I don't see as it matters when or how you dies. That's *my* way o' lookin' at it."

Our next visit was to a bed-ridden old woman, sitting up in bed in a pretty good-sized room, which, amongst a little other furniture, held a sheet-covered sofa. Her pale face lighted up when she saw who had come in.

"Yes, indeed, Mr. S——, I am glad to see you. It's so lonesome lying here without a soul to speak to. Oh, yes, the dear lady called, and most kind to me she's been. She's given me stuff for two beautiful bed-gowns, and the money to get 'em made up. Of course, I'm glad to see any friends of yours—can't the gentleman find a seat?" So the old soul cheerfully ran on at first, but she soon modulated into a minor key. Her "lodgers," late occupants of the covered sofa, for whom she had done "ever so much," had left "ever so much" in her debt, and she feared that she should lose what she called her "pension" from the parish, for bringing such people into it. "However, the Almighty 'ill make it up to me where I'm going," she remarked in a tone of somewhat constrained

resignation, as if she would have preferred the bird in the hand. Whilst she talked, she went on stitching strips of grey squirrel's fur into a child's boa. She had done this work for the same house for I forget how many years ; making, when she had paid for her thread, about three farthings on each boa.

I saw so many poor creatures in bed on that bright, and, in the suburbs, balmy, afternoon, that I cannot exactly remember the order in which I saw them ; but the next, I think, was a little woman literally wasted to skin and bone. She was so pale and pinched, her chin stood up so sharp, that, when she ceased to speak, I could scarcely believe that she was not already a corpse. Because she was ill, her husband had deserted her—left her to lie alone in a dreary closet, November-dim, though the streets blazed in the May sunshine. She spoke hopefully of being able to get into an hospital as soon as she was strong enough to go before a board of gentlemen in Piccadilly ; but she looked far more likely to go, let us hope, to Paradise. Ill as she was, she could think of others. The son of a lodger in the same house, who sometimes visited her, was ailing, she thought, and the mother would like to see the priest. This mother was a hearty Yorkshire woman, seated at tea in a room better furnished than any we had yet visited. A great bedstead, with heavy hangings, stood in one corner ; and, on a little

chiffonnière, there was a display of glass and crockery, and a tiny fern under a case. The room was very close, but, for her children's sake, the good woman said, she could not open the window. The lodger above was a "verra wrathful wummun," and her language was downright awful. For her part, she fain wearied to get back to York. She was diffusely communicative on her domestic concerns. One of her boys was to be taken next day—at least not to be *taken*, for they'd made him pay three shillings for it—to a school treat at—what was the name of that hill where the young gentleman that got twenty years jobbed his young woman?—that the calves saved, you know, sir?—ah, yes, Buckhurst Hill—that was the name. At this point, Bill, the boy on whose behalf we had called, came in,—a chubby, clean, rosy, neatly-dressed little urchin, whose ailment turned out to be nothing more serious than an ear-ache. Bill blushed through bashfulness when his mother informed the priest of his ambition to become a "singing-boy," and with delight, when the priest took him on his knee, and held out hopes of the chorister's cassock and surplice being within Bill's reach. The Yorkshirewoman was one of the faithful. She expatiated on the comparative beauty of the church's appearances on different past festivals, listened delighted to a forecast of the eclipsing splendours it would display on the approaching St. Alban's Day,

and proudly showed a little engraving of Christ on the cross, which one of the clergy had given her, and which her husband was going to frame and glaze for her.

The next good soul we visited was a still Higher Churchwoman, "although," said my guide, with some pride, "she came from a Low-Church parish, and at first was most bigotedly opposed to us." "I'm going to take you to our West-end now," he added, with a laugh, as we turned into the quadrangle of the Model Buildings. Although hemmed in by other buildings, they certainly did look refreshingly light and airy after the holes in which we had been burrowing; and the room we entered was not only spotlessly clean, but had even an elegant appearance. Illuminated texts ran round the walls, which bore also a crucifix, Scripture prints, red-crossed devotional bills of some kind, and a "St. Alban's, Holborn, Parochial Almanac." A striped scarf, the gift of one of the ladies, made a pretty cover for a side-table, and on it, in a glass sugar-basin, stood a bouquet "from Devonshire this morning," the gift of the same kind lady. The occupant of the room, an invalid middle-aged woman, who sat, neatly dressed, upon her bed, said that she had not seen a single violet this spring, and expressed a hope that flowers would be more plentiful this year than they were last. "I know there were not many then," she said,

"because I did not get as many as usual from the church." She looked very pleased when her clergyman told her that he had tried hard to find her some cowslips, when he was on his last "mission" in the country, and that he meant to try every now and then to get a special hamper of flowers for distribution amongst the parishioners. The conversation turned from cowslips to auricular confession. I listened astonished, whilst the good woman talked glibly about the "octave" of this and the "octave" of that, and named a day on which she would feel obliged if the priest would call to confess her.

We went into another comparatively cheerful scene. In the midst of the dirt and noise of St. Alban's there is a clean, quiet, little paved quadrangle, bordered by low, old-fashioned little tenements of the almshouse order of architecture. A few children of a tidier class than elsewhere were skipping and trundling their hoops on the hot-grey stones; the neat, squat little houses seemed to be nodding in the sunlight. In one of these cottages, my guide met with the heartiest welcome he had yet received; but it seemed to be due to his kindness of heart rather than his clerical character. He had been in the habit of visiting there daily whilst the children of the house were ill. "Oh, I *am* glad to see you, Mr. S——," said the mother; "you as used to come so horfen. I was sorry

a'most to see you every day, 'cos *why* you came; and in course I'm glad my boys is better; but it's lonely like not seeing you now. It's so nice to talk to a gen'l'man as takes a *hinterest* in a party. I likes all our clergies, but I'm used to you, you know, sir."

One more sample of parishioners' welcome will suffice. At the bottom of a narrow court, we had knocked so long at the door of a little cottage, jammed up in a corner, without getting an answer, that we were just turning away, under the impression that it must be empty, when the door was opened by an unshorn, lame old man. "Good day, sir," he said, not looking over-pleased. "My wife's gone to the horse-spittle to git my physic; but walk in and set down." He hobbled before us into a little room, whose air smelt strong enough of tobacco to explain the secret of the old man's crustiness. We had, no doubt, disturbed the poor old fellow whilst he was smoking, and, whilst we had been knocking he had been puffing away at his pipe like a locomotive, to finish it before he let us in. The conversation somehow turned on Ascension Day. The lame old man made a most lame attempt to appear interested in an assertion of its equal right with Christmas Day to be kept as a general holiday, and in the announcement that there would be four early communions at St. Alban's on that day, for the convenience of workmen who wished to com-

municate before proceeding to their work. The epochs of the Christian year had a very faint hold on the old man's mind, save as associated with personal material benefit. If he could have been told that Ascension Day would bring him roast beef and plum-pudding and a pot of beer, his appreciation of its claims to respect would have been marvellously stimulated. His stolidity changed into attentive listening, with droll suddenness, when he was informed that henceforth he would be allowed a weekly dole out of the offertory.

I have kept the visit that struck me most for my last record. At the top of a squalid house lay two small-pox patients, in the same room with a corpse, disfigured by the same dreadful disease. I started back with a sick shudder when I ascertained who and what were the occupants of that room; but my companion entered it as calmly, to all appearance, as he had entered any other. Whilst he was in that awful chamber, with the dying and the dead, I stood at an open window on the landing below. At a workshop on the other side of a dirty little yard, in which the sunshine seemed to stagnate, carpenters were whistling music-hall tunes over their planes and up-curling shavings; up the staircase every minute came the filthy, blasphemous language of a knot of sluttish women, squatting on the step of the open door, uttered with as little *malice propense* as when the

decently-bred use "the" or "and." The London poor die under dreariest, most repulsive circumstances; and honour, I say, to the brave men, whether City Missionaries or Ritualistic Clergymen, who risk life to solace their last moments.

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